

THREE FAIR
PHILANTHROPISTS



ALICE M. MUZZY



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THREE FAIR PHILANTHROPISTS

BY ✓

ALICE M. MUZZY

"They belong to that class of wise philanthropists
who, in a time of famine, would vote for nothing but
a supply of toothpicks." DOUGLASS JERROLD.

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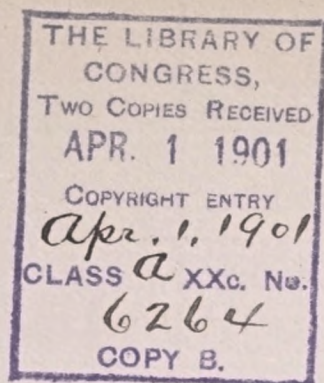
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FIFTH AVENUE

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THREE FAIR PHILANTHROPISTS

CHAPTER I.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE FAIR PHILANTHROPISTS AND THEIR ASSISTANTS.

IN THE fall of the year 18— I, Louise Marchmount Winn, found myself with occupation gone and the necessity laid upon me of seeking some new employment. Private schools were the fields from which I had been reaping a modest competence, but the school with which I was connected having been broken up by the death of its principal I determined to try the cultivation of other soil. It does not seem possible to me now, sitting in the beautiful home which the generosity of my nephew has caused him to share with me, that so short a time ago I was fighting my way in life alone, occupying cold, cheerless hall-bedrooms in cheap lodging-houses.

Still, such is the fact. And what tended to make the hall-bedrooms all the more unattractive was the luxury that had surrounded my childhood, youth and early married life. But business failures, the sickness and death of father, husband and children resulted in leaving me penniless and alone in the great city of New York.

My story deals with the last year of my struggles after these sad events.

God spared to me only one relative, a nephew. He was my husband's sister's child, and was named for my husband, Henry Winn Gifford.

How I loved that boy! And he repaid my affection by never giving me a moment's uneasiness all the hard, struggling years he lived with me; for his parents had died when he was very young, and he never knew a mother's love, except mine.

When I went to teach in the school I have already mentioned he started for California under the care of a business acquaintance of his father's, who promised to look after the boy and do well for him. It was a great trial to be so far away from him, but as nothing as advantageous offered in the city I felt that I must let him go.

"Auntie, when I make some money I shall come for you and you shall always live with me," were his parting words. I heard from him regularly once in two weeks, while I wrote him every week. I would have written him every day had my duties allowed, I missed him so. But perhaps it was better that I should not. He always replied cheerfully, but he gave me no clew whereby I could judge how he was progressing financially. When I wrote him of the change in my plans he replied by asking me if I would not like to come out to him. I thought that it would be difficult for me to get congenial teaching or employment in a strange city. To this view of the case he said:

"Well, if you can be happy a little while longer perhaps it would be best to stay where you are, but do not make any engagement for over a year."

Not a word as to his prospects. I felt quite vexed at him. No one wants to ask another point blank about his private affairs. I was not at all reassured by the

size of the check he sent me, for I knew he was so generous that he would pinch himself for my sake.

There was nothing to do but to wait the natural unfolding of events, and I set myself about the task of finding something to do.

I had spent several weeks in a vain search when the following advertisement in a daily paper attracted my attention:

"WANTED—A lady of high moral character—one interested in schemes of benevolence preferred—to act as matron in a new enterprise. The best of references required, No. — Fifth Ave."

I was certainly interested in schemes of benevolence, although for several years past I had not been able to engage in any. But I came from a family which had been of a philanthropic turn of mind and had had the wealth to gratify such inclinations.

How delightful it would be to feel that, while I was maintaining my own existence, I would also be aiding, no doubt, in a grand work for the benefit of humanity.

I pictured to myself the ladies at the head of this enterprise. They were undoubtedly of that serene middle-life when one ceases to care for the rush and whirl of fashion, and their aims would be the good of others instead of personal aggrandizement. The broadening, ennobling effect of such views would make their society delightful, I doubted not, and I determined to be the first applicant at the Fifth avenue residence indicated in the advertisement.

Imagine, therefore, my surprise on reaching my destination to be ushered into the presence of three fashionably dressed young ladies.

"You have come in answer to our advertisement?" they asked in concert.

I replied that I had, whereupon they began, all together, to tell the object for which I would be required. They went on till they were out of breath, and then they stopped and inquired if I understood.

"Not in the least; how could I?"

"See here, Annie Hopper, now you and Grace Denny can just stop your talking till I make this woman understand what we want of her."

"I would like to know why *you* should tell her any more than Grace or me, Ray Mettle?" angrily asked Annie Hopper.

"Well, I guess I am the president of this undertaking."

"That does not happen to be the president's duty. It is the secretary's."

"I should think it ought to be the treasurer's," lisped Grace Denny.

"I will assume it is the president's to-day," replied the young lady called Ray Mettle, and a look into her cold, hard, grey eye made it seem discouraging to oppose her.

"Then you may assume to make yourself secretary at the same time," cried Miss Hopper, throwing down her books and pencils on the table and starting to leave the room. "You ought to let her be treasurer, too, Grace," she continued, trying to boycott her friend.

"Grace is not so unreasonable. She wants to be treasurer, and I can send over for Lou Morton to be secretary. You know she is very anxious for the position."

"She shan't have it while *I'm* alive," replied Miss Hopper, returning and picking up her books and papers, at the same time applying to her wounded spirit the balm of interrupting and contradicting Miss Mettle whenever an opportunity offered.

"We are going to have a Working Girls' Club," said Miss Mettle. "It will be the best in the city. We are going to have fine rooms, beautifully furnished, in the best possible location, and the girls will be taught all that it is necessary for them to know in their station in life; and, what is more important, they will be instructed in the proper deportment due to their superiors. That is the trouble with the entire wage-earning class. They have not clear views on the question as to *who* their superiors *are*. Now, *we* intend to enlighten them on this point, so that we need not in the future suffer annoyance by their supercilious airs—passing the time of day with you when they are nothing but clerks behind the counter and ought to be deferential, or staring at you to catch up any new style of bonnet that may have been imported from Paris at great expense and trouble, and appearing with it the next day in such numbers as to make people think you have copied from them, instead of the reverse. They will be taught the proper way of taking samples, and they will not snatch them as though they were birds of prey and the sample a tempting morsel, as is the case now. You will see if there is not a great revolution in the conduct of those girls. People say they have such manners because they are ignorant. Now, we propose to teach them. And another thing, we do not intend to have any other society of working girls get ahead of us in any respect. We shall be the largest. We shall spend the most money. Probably we shall have to turn away applicants by the score, for we have only room for two hundred. And then I guess we shall see what Miss Eleanor Christy will think, with her miserable club down in the lower part of the city," etc., etc.

I was not interested in Miss Mettle's vituperative re-

marks regarding the rival club, so as soon as possible I interrupted her with the question:

"And my duties will be?"

"You will have nothing to do, scarcely," replied Miss Mettle.

"Then I don't see the need of having her," whispered Miss Hopper.

"Be still, will you, Annie Hopper!" exclaimed Miss Denny. "Don't you understand, it's the style to have matrons, *femmes de chargé*, or thing-a-bobs of that description."

"We shall give you your room and salary," exclaimed Miss Mettle, magnanimously waving her hand in the direction of an adjoining minute apartment, "and your duties will be to maintain the honor and dignity of the place."

Miss Denny hid her face and audibly snickered at this, saying something about my short stature and the difficulty of inspiring dignity with a dumpling.

"Then I suppose you have another person engaged to do your visiting and investigating of cases when there are calls for aid," I replied as pleasantly as I could, for my dreams of enjoying the broadening, ennobling companionship of my philanthropic employers were being rudely dealt with.

"Visiting; of course, not! We have no one engaged for visiting. That will be your diversion. Everybody has to have some pleasant pastime or other."

I was not engaged at the first interview, nor the second. Neither was my salary, which in the first place was a small sum, allowed to remain at that figure, but it was cut down until I did not know but what finally they would claim a bonus for allowing me the privilege of filling the position. I discovered afterward the

various interviews were taken in order to allow them the opportunity of selecting a more imposing-looking personage, but being disappointed in their endeavors they finally settled on plain, short-sighted, dumpy little me.

CHAPTER II.

TREATS OF FIRE AND FLOOD.

THE day selected for the formal opening of the enterprise in which I now found myself embarked occurred early in October. The morning of that day Miss Denny brought in a band-box and asked me if I would mind wearing a cap and white 'kerchief in which to receive the guests.

I replied hesitatingly that I would if they wished it, though I greatly preferred not to do so.

I found afterward that it was a foolish concession to make, for it was followed by a request to stand in the ante-room and help the ladies take off their wraps. If anybody had made such a request of me when I was younger, I fear they would not have had such a peaceful time of it as these ladies did. But I was old enough to look at the matter in a philosophical light. I quelled my rising resentment by the thought that better people than I could ever hope to be had been called to fill positions mortifying to their pride. Had not the blessed Master, when He girded Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet, given us a glorious example of the beauty of true humility in service? I tell you that thought lifted the discontent from my heart very quickly and I tried to be as faithful in looking after the wraps and as careful of laces and ruffles as though I had been born and bred a lady's maid.

There was a large crowd of gay fashionables present.

It was too early in the fall for "the season" to have commenced, though it was late enough for large numbers to have returned from the country.

Miss Mettle, Miss Hopper and Miss Denny were resplendent in satin and lace dresses of different hues, cut in the extreme of fashion. I could see from the scowls that appeared ever and anon upon their foreheads and the glances of lightning-like displeasure they cast at each other that they were maintaining their usual amiable interchange of thought upon such subjects as who should first shake hands with the guests, how long each one should be detained, etc.

The guests offered their congratulations in various forms.

Mrs. McDuffy, a portly dame, rather given to look askance at any movement not originated by herself, said:

"I congratulate you, young ladies, on the work you are about beginning. I suppose you wanted to be in the fashion. My daughters have been teasing me to let them organize a club, but I have said I thought there were too many already."

A Mrs. Evanston, the most exquisitely featured person in the assembly, said:

"Young ladies, I think you are deserving of the greatest honor and praise. The mere thought of the lower classes sends the cold chills all over me. If I were not so sensitive to odors and my health were not so exceedingly delicate, I should gladly put my name down in that list you are making out for helpers to come evenings and assist in your work. But I see you have a large number of names and do not need mine."

Mrs. Evanston had just finished this speech when she turned round and the sight that greeted her eyes made her utter an exquisitely modulated note of surprise, for

what did she see but some of the dreaded lower classes approaching.

Miss Mettle's notices and advertisements had stated that the club would be opened on this evening, and, though she had not expected them, quite a company of girls had arrived.

Mrs. Evanston gasped and put her exquisite lace handkerchief to her nose.

"Oh," she said faintly, "if I had thought I should have been subjected to such an ordeal as this, I should have brought my bottle of stronger salts." She sank into a chair and asked some one to fan her.

It may not have struck other persons present, but I noticed that the lady's exquisite complexion lost none of its apparent freshness by the depressed state of her feelings.

"There, Anna, I told you so," Mrs. McDuffy said, pulling the sleeve of one of the daughters who wanted a club. "I told you that you would have to deal with the most presumptuous creatures that ever lived, and now you see for yourself that I am right."

A dude with flashing eye and bated breath ejaculated:

"You don't mean to tell me that they are going to sit in the same room with us! By Jove! but that is enough to make a man feel like fighting."

A wheezy old philosopher wiped the perspiration from his forehead as he sighed:

"Oh, the problems of the age! How they increase in number and in difficulty!"

I could not think why one or the other of the hostesses did not go to this group of newcomers, but when I looked to see what was the trouble I discovered that each was sure it was the other's duty and not her own.

Finally Miss Mettle motioned to me to go, and I did so. I welcomed the girls warmly, for I was sincerely glad to see them. I proceeded to seat them on camp-stools when Miss Mettle came up to me and said, fiercely:

“Winn! Winn!” (She had said she would take that liberty with my name for the evening—*a la Anglaise*, I suppose.) “Did you not know that these young women ought to be seated in the hall?”

“No,” I returned calmly, “I did *not*, for I knew they would not have stayed in the hall, but have gone home. If *you* wish to dismiss them after having invited them you can do so.”

I presume Miss Mettle was surprised to hear such a decided remark from one who had up to this point showed such a yielding disposition; but fear lest the girls should be sent home and the club become a failure by such unwise treatment in the beginning, made me deem it expedient to speak with decision.

The speech had the desired effect. Miss Mettle took her place and the literary exercises of the evening began.

The principal address was made by a member of Congress—a stout, bald-headed, pompous gentleman—a widower, as I learned afterward, who was laying seige to Miss Mettle’s heart. He had a deep, bass voice, much too loud for the room, and when he sternly asked at the opening of his peroration: “Who of us does not feel thrilled at the momentous significance of the present occasion?” no one, unless stone deaf, could have denied being thrilled, at least in the region of the ears.

Isaak Walton gives to fishermen three rules which might be followed with great advantage by public speakers. They are: “First, hide yourself; second, hide yourself some more; third, keep hiding yourself.”

If Mr. K. Roundout Grout’s next meal had depended

on his observance of these rules there is great reason to believe that a very slender repast would have been the result. Before he had reached his third sentence he was referring to what he tried to do before he went to Congress, and after that it was "we Congressmen" and "I, as chairman of one of the most important committees in the House," which he afterward referred to as the committee on deciding the color of the badges to be worn on a certain occasion. Of course, next to his own praises he sang those of "the illustrious president of the eminently wise and beneficent philanthropic undertaking, whose birthday we celebrate."

Miss Ray Mettle's cold, hard face relaxed into something as near like radiance as such a face can ever display, and when she looked around and saw the scowl on Miss Annie Hopper's countenance, her pleasurable emotions seemed to be increased. Whether her joy caused her hand to be unsteady, or whether she jarred her arm against the table and dropped a piece of the lighted taper used by the secretary for her sealing wax will never be known. But what every one in that assembly would be willing to testify in court was that Miss Mettle jumped up suddenly, screaming, "Fire! fire!" while a cloud of smoke arose from the drapery of her long-trained dress.

For a company of people, with such intimate and extensive knowledge of etiquette, whose cheeks would all have blushed with shame if they could not have answered any question, no matter how trivial, in regard to the correct way of folding their notepaper or the size of their cards, it was astonishing to see how completely they ignored all the rules of polite society at this juncture of affairs. Mr. K. Roundout Grout, whom a short time previous you would not have thought any consideration could have forced to have stepped before a lady, now deliberately

and with great expedition stepped in front of several (without offering his arm to any, by the way) and dashed off downstairs. He was closely followed by the dude whose warlike spirit had doubtless reached that stage of elevated sentiment that made him feel, in order to fight another day, he must haste and run away. And right here it might be well to add, by way of caution, if that fellow could fight as well as he showed himself able to run, he would be a dangerous adversary.

But they were the last to be able to run out of the room; for two ladies, Mrs. McDuffy and her friend, Mrs. Bunce, both ladies of generous dimensions, being in too much haste to allow each other the right of way, endeavored to pass through the door together. The result was a complete blockade.

How the diamonds rattled round the necks of these two unfortunates as they vainly struggled to free themselves.

The excitement in the room rose higher. Everybody cleared the space before Miss Mettle, who flew down the room crying, "Blow me out!" Miss Denny crawled down behind a sofa and Miss Hopper climbed on a chair and commenced jumping up and down, wringing her hands in fright. As Miss Mettle reached the small band of the lower classes, one of them, a tall, delicate-looking girl, picked up a rug and threw it upon the burning train, and if Miss Mettle had remained still a minute the flames would have been out. But, as so many do in similar circumstances, she ran to get away from the fire, thus fanning it into fresh life. The courageous girl followed Miss Mettle with another rug, begging her to stand still. I felt this was no time for ceremony and that all our lives were endangered if the fire were not speedily extinguished. I therefore stepped in front of Miss Mettle and converted myself into a period by throwing my arms around her

waist and dropping full weight in front of her. There was no other way but for her to come to a full stop. In a few moments by the aid of the rugs the fire was completely extinguished.

"Winn," said the recently flaming lady, "under ordinary circumstances I should not care to have you take such liberties with me."

She was shaking out her gown, which was entirely minus a train, and trying to resume her old bearing. I held up my burnt hands and replied:

"I think I am sufficiently punished for any familiarity I have taken."

"Don't make such a fuss over a little burn," returned Miss Mettle unsympathetically.

"I do not think I ought to complain," I returned, "when this poor girl is so much worse off."

My attention had been drawn to the girl who had also fought the fire. Her dress sleeves were both entirely consumed, revealing a pair of shapely arms disfigured with burns. Miss Mettle looked and even her hard heart seemed touched.

"We must have a doctor look at your arms," she said to the girl. "What's the matter at the door?" she continued, not having previously noticed the sad state of the two ladies. "Mrs. McDuffy, will you please be so kind as to step along."

"There is nothing I would like to do better than to step along," returned Mrs. McDuffy. "But, oh dear! I am afraid, now, Mrs. Bunce and I shall never get away from here!" and the poor lady commenced to cry.

"Don't cry," I said, "there are some men out there in the hall. They will surely be able to help you out."

"Oh, no," replied the men referred to, "we have no kid gloves on. We offered to help them but they were so

afraid we should *touch* them, that now they may help themselves."

"Where is the orator of the day, the grandiloquent champion of woman?" I asked.

"Coward; chicken-hearted man; don't mention his name to me," said Miss Mettle. "After all his professions see how fast he ran when I was on fire."

Just then the deep tones of the big-chested orator were heard at the foot of the stairs asking about the fire. When he learned that the danger had passed he gingerly ascended the stairs, all the time looking carefully about him.

"Ah, my dear Miss Mettle!" he exclaimed as he caught sight of that lady's tall form, "I have been using all my energies to serve you. I have been after the fire department."

"We have no need of it," returned Miss Mettle haughtily.

"No need of the fire department for a fire?" returned K. Roundout Grout, assuming an injured air.

"But there is no fire," returned Miss Mettle.

At that instant crash went a pane of glass and in rushed a stream of water with great force against the opposite wall. Here was a new element of danger. We had escaped the fire and now came the flood.

Out darted Miss Denny from beneath the sofa, and Mrs. Evanston, who had fallen in a faint right in the track of the stream, revived very speedily at the first dash of the water in her face. The fire department had arrived sure enough, and soon the occupants of the hall had lively work to dodge the three big streams of water, turned in to extinguish a fire which had been out some time.

"Go, and stop them quick, quick!" cried Miss Mettle. "Oh, look at the walls and window hangings! Ruined completely!"

"This comes of your getting yourself on fire!" retorted Miss Hopper. "I never saw anybody who could upset things as you do."

There was one benefit arising from the inflow of the water. Mrs. McDuffy and Mrs. Bunce were enabled to give such a violent jerk that they released themselves from their very trying position.

Mrs. Evanston caught sight of the ruin wrought by the water on her complexion and she was so distracted that she ran all the way home, though her carriage was waiting just round the corner to be called.

The room was soon cleared and the doctor on hand to attend to the burned arms. I had felt myself irresistibly drawn toward the girl who had shown such good sense and pluck.

I think I mentioned before that I was near sighted. It is owing to that fact that I did not discover how exceedingly pretty she was, for until I heard her utter a half-stifled groan I did not come near enough to have a good look at her. But when I asked, "Do your arms hurt you?" she turned on me a pair of hazel eyes so large and tender that my own were filled with sympathetic tears. We were firm friends from that moment.

"And *you* were burned too?" she asked.

"Only a little," I replied.

How gently the doctor applied his bandages! but in spite of his care, his patient fainted twice.

My heart was deeply stirred by the sight. I felt that here was some one whose lot in life was similar to my own. It roused all the mother instincts of my soul. I begrudged others the privilege of waiting on her. The doctor caught sight of my hands as I was holding a cup of water for her to drink and he insisted on binding them up.

The young ladies, followed by K. Roundout Grout and

the dude, spent most of the time the doctor was attending to our wounds in going around the room estimating the losses resulting from the fire and flood.

At the conclusion of the operations the doctor, whose quick preceptions had been his only guide, turned to Miss Mettle and asked:

"I believe your father is of the firm Mettle, Shaw & Co., No. — Broadway?" and he proceeded to make a memorandum.

"Yes, but what has that to do with you?" asked Miss Mettle sharply. "I told you to bring a dispensary physician," turning to the dude.

"Well, madam, supposing he had brought a dispensary physician (which I am not) do you think they are paid to attend people in your circumstances?"

He looked around at the luxurious room.

"But you were not called here to attend to *me*," replied Miss Mettle scornfully.

How thankful I was for the check in my pocket! I pulled it out and said:

"You were called here for this poor girl and myself and I am glad that I can settle with you."

"Madam," he said, looking reproachfully at me, "do you think so contemptibly of me as to suppose for an instant that I would take anything from *you*? But I should like to have Miss Mettle inform me *how* you and this young lady came by your burns? I don't see any scars on these two young gentlemen. It is singular, is it not?"

Mr. K. Roundout Grout and the dude looked very foolish. But the former, who had been gazing fixedly, in a way my inmost soul abhorred, at the beautiful girl, pulled out his purse and offered to settle the account.

"Excuse me, sir," said I, firmly, "that is something which does not fall to your share. I am sure the doctor will see

the impropriety of receiving his fee from any one but Miss Mettle or myself."

"Certainly, madam," he replied. "I have Mr. Mettle's business address and that is sufficient. I bid you all a very good evening."

"That's just the way," snapped Miss Mettle; "if one gets a reputation for benevolence people expect one to do everything for everybody. Here are these rooms to be gone over again after all they cost in the first place. More than half the bills for the first furnishing are not paid, I presume. How do our affairs stand, treasurer?" turning to Grace Denny.

That young lady was interested in a lively conversation with the dude and did not care to be interrupted, so she replied carelessly:

"I am sure I don't know."

"There is her book over there," said Miss Hopper, "let us look for ourselves."

"He would have to be a very astute person who could derive any information from these pages," cried K. Roundout Grout, turning hot and red from his attempt to eliminate the useless from the valuable.

"No dates!" cried Miss Hopper; "the receipts and expenditures are all mixed up on the same page and both added together at the bottom. She's put down the dollar and a half that I lent *her*, and has omitted to give me credit for the one hundred dollars I gave to the club!"

The laughter that greeted this statement caused Miss Denny to look over at the party who were seeking light but finding none.

"How dare you examine my books and papers without permission?" she asked angrily.

"These are not private. We have more occasion to ask how dare you keep such careless accounts?"

The dude, on whom it seems necessary at this juncture of affairs to define by a more distinctive appellation (as it remains an incontrovertible, however deplorable, fact that there are numerous copies in the edition of the peculiar work to which he belongs), we will hereafter know by the name of Kipp Grassey.

"Say, I want to know, now, if this is the way you thank any one for working for you?" he asked, all the time smoothing and pulling out his nether lip which made very poor returns for his labor. "If I was Miss Denny I would not keep any more accounts for you."

"Well, we do not want any more kept like these," said Miss Hopper.

"And if you feel so badly about it, why not offer to keep them for her?" laughed Miss Mettle.

"Why, of course," broke in Mr. Grout; "Mr. Grassey looks as though he was longing to."

This was a neat sarcasm, for the dude, from his lofty collar to his patent leathers, showed a decided apprehensiveness, though he said, hesitatingly, "Oh! certainly, certainly."

"Well, then, with such an assistant, we will try you another month," said Miss Mettle, whose word was law.

CHAPTER III.

AGNES DEARBORN.

I SPENT a restless, uncomfortable night after the excitements incident to the fire and flood. My hands troubled me by their itching and smarting, and I could not keep from asking myself if the wounds I had received were so painful what must that young girl suffer who had been burned so much more deeply than myself, and what would become of her if she could not resume her work on the morrow?

In reply to my remark that she would probably have to be idle for a week she had given me a quick look and said:

“No, I cannot afford it for a day.”

It was all in vain that I called myself “Dame Meddlesome” and “Mother Fuss” for being interested in the fate of one whom I had seen so short a time before and about whom I knew so little. I knew enough, I argued with myself, to understand that she was somebody who needed help, and that she was worthy of such aid she abundantly proved by her generous and courageous efforts to assist others, the evening before.

How I wondered what she was doing! And what her past life had been, and what were her surroundings at present. However rough and coarse they might be they had left none of their impress on her.

I had taken the precaution to ask her address and in the morning, after I had attended to the duties of my

position, I went to see in what condition I should find her. The number I sought was very far west on the street below where the club rooms were situated.

Arrived at my destination I found a very cheap lodging-house, a little cleaner than the generality, and, asking for Miss Agnes Dearborn, I was told to go to the back room in the attic.

I felt some timidity while climbing the stairs. I thought Agnes would pardon any seeming officiousness on account of my desire to learn of her state, but her family might feel that I was overstepping the bounds of propriety. I knocked, therefore, somewhat gently, but receiving no answer I repeated the action and heard a man's voice in trembling tones say, "Come in." I opened the door and found myself in the presence of an old man. His large, handsome head was well covered with beautiful white hair, and his frame, naturally intended to be a vigorous one, was shrunken and wasted with disease. On hearing my errand he courteously arose and gave me his hand:

"You are very kind to take this trouble for my poor daughter. She ought not to have gone out this morning. She did not sleep at all last night. But, as you may imagine, one pair of hands cannot lie idle very long when the expenses of sickness have to be met. I was sorry she encountered such an accident, for it was particularly at my request that she attended the club last evening. I am not young, as you see, and I wanted to feel that when I am gone she would be connected with some sort of organization where her interests would be looked after. The future does not hold out bright prospects for my poor child," he continued, tremulously, wiping away a tear.

"It may seem dark for this life, but if we have put

ourselves into God's keeping our real and eternal future cannot fail to be bright with heaven's glory."

"There is precious comfort in that thought," Mr. Dearborn replied; but further remark in that vein was interrupted by our hearing a feeble faltering step approach the door and an attempt to turn the knob.

When at length the door opened, Agnes stood there, her face like a ghost's. I advanced quickly and threw my arm around her, saying:

"Poor dear child, lean on me!" The minute she felt the support she gave way and sank on my shoulder unconscious.

How like death she looked as we laid her tenderly on the sofa, her beautiful features pinched and tense with the pain she had been suffering!

"Agnes, darling," cried her father, pitifully, as the faint continued, "you surely have not gone before your poor old father? Speak to me, my child!" and he rubbed her hands excitedly, while the tears rolled down his cheeks.

There are some scenes through which we pass that stamp themselves indelibly on our minds and this was one. I never shall forget the shabby, comfortless room and the motionless form of the young and beautiful girl, wept over by the aged man whose last support and earthly tie lay broken before him.

But at length the large hazel eyes slowly opened and in a dazed way, Agnes asked:

"Where am I? How did I get back from the store? And how good of you, dear Mrs. Winn, to stay till I came to myself!" and, recovering still more and noticing the tears on her father's face, "What a shame for me to frighten you so!"

She tried to put her arms around his neck but the

pain and stiffness were too great, so she contented herself with patting his cheek.

"Well, now I must leave you," I said, after I had seen her enough better to sit up. "I am going to send the doctor to you and you are to follow out his prescriptions to the very letter. I will send or bring the needful funds for your expenses during the week, for Miss Mettle will wish to do the fair thing."

I said this with a little more assurance than I really felt; but I thought of my check, still unbroken, and I knew if she failed in her duty I could supply the deficiency.

I had several matters of pressing importance to talk over with Miss Mettle, so I determined to go directly to her home—a large, showy house on Fifth avenue, near the Park. The contrast between this place and the miserable little rooms I had just left was too striking to be enjoyable.

Miss Mettle's mother came in to see me before her daughter. She was a short, plump lady with bright, black eyes and iron-grey hair, which she wore in a high pompadour on the top of her head. Her dress was youthful and her manners the vivacious and sprightly outgrowth of a mind which scorned the idea of age.

I winced a little under the marked spirit of condescension with which she received me, but I was trying to accustom myself to all kinds of treatment so that I might have no feeling on the subject.

"My daughter has started a formidable undertaking," she remarked, after graciously waving me to a seat. "I cannot quite understand what she means to do or how she means to do it. 'Elevating the masses' is a very nice sounding phrase, but there is a vagueness about it which discourages me. Still, my daughter is very smart and if anybody can elevate the masses *she* can. She has her

father's gift for business push and means to do the thing up handsomely. That's the best way. Don't let any get ahead of you if you can help it. There is no one that will try it except a Miss Christie, of whom my daughter has doubtless spoken to you. But she will find her hands full, I rather think."

After my vivacious, lively friend had talked herself out of breath, feeling that I would like to ascertain her opinion of the occurrences of the previous evening, I inquired:

"Does your daughter feel any ill effects from her fright?"

"Not a bit," she replied. "Ray is so well and strong that nothing ever seems to affect her. But tell me how did it all happen? Were you where you could see the very first of it? How did Ray look when she was on fire? And did dear Mr. Grout do all he could for her? Oh, such a nice man as he is—member of Congress—leader in society—lots of money and first wife died one year ago—a terrible blow, but he is rallying from it. How fond he is of Ray! It draws tears from my eyes to see them together, and I think it my duty to bring them together just as much as I can."

It was some time becoming exhausted (the breath I refer to) but at last my chance came and I gave all the incidents of the night before, making the scene as graphic as possible. I did not enlarge on the expedition with which the "dear Mr. Grout" darted from the room on the first cry of alarm, but I mentioned it in an emphatic way, which drew from her the explanatory remark:

"Oh, well, he was so anxious to get the fire department before it was too late."

Then I described in my most eloquent manner the beau-

tiful creature who had the courage to do what the men were afraid of doing, when Mrs. Mettle ejaculated:

"Well, of course, why shouldn't she? Think how much my daughter is doing for her."

"Is *going* to do, you mean," I replied, "but your daughter's favors up to that moment consisted merely in the permission to occupy a camp stool," (which permission, I wanted to add, was very grudgingly given) "and the future is always more or less uncertain. If this accident had happened a month or so later and this young girl had been greatly benefited by the club, it would not have been so remarkable, perhaps; only the instinct of self-preservation is so strong that occasionally innumerable favors do not serve to overcome its impulses."

I did not understand at the time what made Mrs. Mettle look sharply at me as I uttered this last sage remark; but on becoming better acquainted I found that if favors were the means whereby one was to gain the devotion of another, she had showered enough on Mr. K. Roundout Grout to have made him long for a chance to burn himself to a cinder, if need were, so that he might repay her kindness.

"And now the poor girl is obliged to stay away from her work a week at least," I said, approaching the subject in which I was most interested.

"That is too bad," returned Mrs. Mettle. "It will be very dull for her, I dare say. I will give you a couple of stories to take her. 'Molly Bawn' is a clever kind of a book to while away a tiresome hour. And then——"

"But, unfortunately," I impatiently interrupted, "*ennui* is the least of her troubles. A cessation in her wages means something besides a mere loss of a pleasant method of spending the time. It means a loss of the actual necessities of life."

Miss Mettle entered at this moment, her tall, commanding figure resplendent in a purple velvet suit which evidently was of recent origin, as she walked up to the pier glass and began to regard it first in one light and then another, her steel-grey eyes gleaming with admiration when a favorable turn discovered new beauties, and anon a frown darkened her brow as a tiny wrinkle was visible.

"Who is that you were speaking about, Mrs. Winn, who wanted the necessaries of life?" she asked at length.

"I was telling your mother of the destitute condition of the young girl who was so badly burned putting out the fire in your dress."

"Now, see here, Mrs. Winn, you are a good woman and mean well, I've no doubt," returned Miss Mettle, "but you might as well learn first as last that although it is my intention to elevate and better the condition of the girls that come to the club I do not intend to support them one and all by any means."

"But you wish to deal justly," I replied, "and if one of them gives you a week's work by the heroic manner in which she serves you in a given emergency you do not wish her to go unrewarded, especially as such neglect on your part may mean starvation with her."

"Oh, starvation! That's the old story. They have taken you in, Mrs. Winn."

"Well, here is the number of her house. Take it and go and see for yourself," I replied.

"But that is too far away, and I am not suitably dressed," stopping to consider a moment. "How much do you want?"

"Twenty dollars a week until she gets well. Perhaps one week will find her able to resume her work."

"Twenty dollars! Do be a little reasonable. She never

made twenty dollars in a week I will venture to say. It is more likely eight or ten."

"No, she makes fifteen as bookkeeper and the extra five I intended for her medical attendance."

"Pooh! she can get all the medical attendance she needs for nothing."

"Not for the first week. She will be too feeble to go to a physician, and I know she would not have a man come to her without paying him if she had to go without eating to do so."

Here there arose a controversy between Mrs. Mettle and her daughter, the burden of which was the desire on the part of the young lady to borrow the sum from her mother and a decided unwillingness in the latter to comply with the request.

As I sat waiting for them to come to some sort of an agreement I wondered if Providence had spared me my daughter till she was a young lady would we have fallen into the habit so many mothers and daughters allow themselves, of snarling at each other. Not a fierce snarl but a plaintively unhappy or hopelessly aggrieved kind of a snarl, which causes the voice to run the entire gamut up and down. Set to music you know just how it sounded when Miss Mettle said:

"Now, mother, you might let her have twenty from that thousand-dollar dividend you received yesterday."

"Yes, I suppose you think I can break into the amount which I have been reserving for that copper mine investment. Why don't you give it to her from the hundred your father gave you this morning?"

"And then where would my new dress come from for Mrs. Belmont's ball?" etc., etc.

And as they stood talking, both ladies unconsciously were toying with ornaments, one on her wrist and the

other lying on the table among dozens of others, that cost double the amount I was asking for, the support of two human beings for a week.

At length, looking at the clock, I said:

"If it is not convenient for you to hand me the money this morning I can advance it and I will not trouble you for it till the end of the month."

Mrs. Mettle agreed to this as the easier way; but Miss Mettle was inexorable. The money must be paid *now*, and her mother must pay it. It was a gallant fray! Both mother and daughter showed pluck and determination. And as I watched the ebb and flow of the war of words sometimes I thought victory would be to the one and then again to the other.

In truth, however, I suppose neither of them acknowledged defeat, for Mr. Mettle came in during the fiercest of the combat. He was a man not much taller than his wife, stout but muscular, with a head bordered by a fringe of red hair around a bald surface of considerable extent. His blue eyes had a kindly, pleasant expression, at the same time that they showed character and shrewdness.

Evidently he was accustomed to scenes like the present, for he did not appear in the least disturbed as he asked:

"What in thunder is the matter? Are you giving a scene from the monkey and parrot comedy for your visitor here? When I came in it sounded as though all the monkeys and parrots in Central Park had got together by the ears," and after listening to an explanation, he continued: "Just like a woman to make more of a fuss over twenty dollars than a man over twenty thousand. Here, take this," handing out a twenty-dollar bill; "if peace can be had for that small sum do let us have it."

CHAPTER IV.

MODELS OF ACCOUNT KEEPING AND PARLIAMENTARY
USAGE.

THERE was a meeting of the executive committee to be held late in the afternoon and Miss Mettle and her double treasurer, who it was yet to be shown was equal to a single good one, had agreed to meet an hour beforehand to find out how the club's finances stood.

Mr. Grassey was present, but Miss Denny did not arrive. After waiting some time Miss Mettle decided to proceed without her. The young gentleman did not seem pleased with the prospect, but gave an unwilling consent, and they began to set down the various sums of money expended as they found them on the bills Miss Mettle held in her hand.

"Now, Mr. Grassey, see how much they come to when they are all added up."

Mr. Grassey took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead; he cleared his throat; he looked longingly toward the door; he felt in his pocket for his penknife and commenced sharpening his pencil; but, finally, with a long-drawn sigh he laboriously attempted the task, and deep mutterings of "two and six make eight, and five, etc.," were heard. The length of time consumed in running up the first column of figures would have sufficed an ordinarily clever schoolboy to perform all the sums on a page of his arithmetic, allowing for the usual interruptions of whistling, cat-calls and an occasional standing on his head.

Miss Mettle was occupied in looking over other ac-

counts, so that she did not notice. At length returning to the matter she said:

"Excuse me for keeping you waiting, but how much did you find those sums amounted to?"

Mr. Grassey's hair was in a widely dishevelled state from his running his hand through it. Perhaps he thought outward friction of the brain might rouse that rather dormant part of his organism.

"There!" he said, slapping his knee, "I forgot to carry the five, and it's all wrong," and he wiped afresh the beads of perspiration that stood upon his forehead.

"Well, never mind. Take down these new numbers, which are the sums that have been subscribed, and you can add up the others afterward."

They had only just got to work on this task when a knock came, and the door being opened, Mr. Grassey rose, saying:

"Oh, yes, Miss Mettle, sorry to leave you, but here is my man with my tandem. I am driving it every day now, and I shall have to go. It will be impossible for me to stay another minute."

And in spite of his attempt to conceal it Mr. Grassey's every movement, his quick, short, mincing steps, his jerking at his collar and tie, to say nothing of the lighting up of his never too expressionful or soulful countenance, betrayed his pleasure and relief at having an excuse to withdraw from his exhausting labors.

"Well, never mind, you can finish finding out how much these two columns amount to at home. Miss Denny will be in later and I will give her the same, and then we will see if you get them alike."

For half an hour after the time agreed upon for the executive committee meeting no one appeared. Then the portly figure of Mr. K. Roundout Grout entered.

"So glad to find you alone," he remarked, tenderly shaking Miss Mettle's hand.

"I am not alone; Mrs. Winn is in there," pointing to where I sat in an adjoining room.

"Well, she doesn't count. You and I are alone, as far as spiritual affinities go, eh, Miss Mettle?"

Mr. Grout wore a rose of a tender hue in his buttonhole and his rubicund countenance was still further irradiated by a smile of no mean extent.

"I have just come from a talk with your estimable mother. She always dissipates my doubts and fears and gives me fresh courage." He stopped and looked at Miss Mettle plaintively, sighing a lugubrious sigh, as if the cold, impassive face before him was rapidly counteracting all the good effects derived from the cordiality of the mother.

Miss Mettle's sternness of manner somewhat relaxed as she glanced over a paper she held in her hand, and she said, more graciously:

"I hope, Mr. Grout, you will be ready to settle your subscription this afternoon. I am going to ask all of those who have made subscriptions to pay up. There are bills already contracted, and then the repairs. By good rights you ought to be made to bear all the expense of restoring the rooms to their condition before the fire department ruined them with the water."

A careful scrutiny of Mr. K. Roundout Grout's face after this remark would have revealed a suffusion of cholerick light, accompanied by certain twitchings around the mouth, indicating a desire to relieve his suppressed emotions by speaking his mind. But, to his credit be it spoken, he resisted the temptation and merely asked:

"What is the amount of my subscription?"

"One hundred dollars," returned Miss Mettle. "Will you make it two hundred?"

Mr. Grout thoughtfully held his chin between his thumb and forefinger for a minute; then he said:

"For *your* sake, *dear* Miss Mettle, I would gladly, but it will be impossible."

"Nonsense, I accept no refusal; besides, it's nothing more than your duty."

Again the choleric light appeared on the gentleman's face, but again the temptation to words was resisted.

"I shall put you down for another hundred."

Just at this instant the door opened and Miss Denny entered. Her lithe form was swathed in the garb of an æsthete.

"Hey-day! I thought I was going to be late and there is no one here. What's the matter with the rest of the committee?"

"They thought it would be a good plan to give you the time to cast up your accounts before they arrived," returned Miss Mettle sarcastically. "Here they are. Now set yourself to work on them," handing her papers.

"Where is Mr. Grassey?" lisped Miss Denny in dismay. "He promised me solemnly to be on hand."

"He has been on hand and probably was so heartbroken because you were not here he could not stand it," said Miss Mettle.

"The lazy, contemptible fellow!" raged Miss Denny. "Does he think I am going to do his work?"

The little peaked head covering she wore, on which, amid bows of ribbon, were long, curling, antennæ looking feathery aigrettes, trembled with the emotions of their wearer.

"It does not seem as if the men nowadays had any manners or heart to them!" she continued.

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Mr. Grout, solemnly, in his deep awe-inspiring voice.

"Oh, I don't mean you," rejoined Miss Denny, with a shiver. "You would never have gone off and left a person with everything to do, would you, now, Mr. Grout?" this with the archest look from her bright black eyes. "Kipp Grassey I thoroughly despise. If he should live to be as old as Methuselah he never would be old enough to be a man. He only knows enough to hold the reins in his tandem, and he has to depend on his man to tell him when to pull them up or change their course."

"You do not seem to find his society very bad when you are with him," replied Miss Mettle.

"Don't I though? You cannot see how many yawns I have to stifle nor how I long to hear him say one single new, bright remark. Oh, stupidity, inanity, asininity, thy embodiment in human shape, would be most perfectly set forth in the form of Mr. K. Grassey!"

Miss Denny had evidently been taking lessons in elocution, and her naturally artificial manners (if the reader will pardon such a paradox) had been rendered more grotesquely affected, so that her rendering of the above elevated sentiment was extremely ludicrous.

Mr. Grout smiled and Miss Denny, feeling that she had a sympathetic admirer for the time being in the member of Congress, of whom she had stood somewhat in awe, was encouraged to try other of her arts and wiles. She said all the soft, sweet things she could think of, she looked at him with her head at every conceivable angle and she enticed him away from Miss Mettle's side to a sofa, where she beguiled him with stories as flat and vapid as herself, than which it would be impossible to think of anything worse. She succeeded in rousing Miss Mettle's ire to such an extent that that amiable personage called out:

"You talk about longing so to hear something new from Mr. Grassey. Such a chatterer as you are would not give

a man a chance to say anything if he were a Chesterfield."

Miss Denny was about to make a suitable reply to this too truthful statement, when Mr. Grassey appeared. There was nothing to reveal his former ruffled state of mind but a certain jerked look about his tie.

"I thought I'd come back and invite some one to go with me for a drive in the park."

A spider could not have beaten Miss Denny in the rapidity with which she left the sofa where she had been entertaining the congressman.

"How very kind and thoughtful," she murmured; "quite like you. Miss Mettle will be delighted, I am sure, to accompany you."

"Miss Mettle indeed!" retorted that young lady. "Perhaps you think I am such an irresponsible agent as to start off when a meeting of the committee is about to assemble?"

Mr. Grassey put his hand up to his head as if the mental strain of the short time previous was still afflicting him, and he said, deprecatingly:

"Really, Miss Mettle, I am not feeling well this afternoon, and I am sorry not to finish what you wanted me to; but, really, I shall have to do it some other time."

He was putting his hand on the knob to leave, without extending his invitation to Miss Denny, when that person detained him by saying sweetly, though a certain sparkle in her eye betrayed an inward state of mind that was far from sweet:

"I do not wonder you enjoy driving in the park, you are such a fine horseman."

"You are too kind to say so; my man, James, says not many tandems get better handled in New York city."

This was a left-handed compliment, as James did most of the handling.

"Indeed, he is very astute, that man of yours. He knows a great deal, and a compliment from him means something."

Poor Miss Denny had a rather lengthy time fishing for her desired invitation, but at length it came, and she replied promptly:

"I shall be most happy. There is nothing so delightful as a ride with you after your beautiful tandem. I feel so safe when *you* hold the reins."

Turning to Miss Mettle, she said:

"Supposing you let Mrs. Winn get the accounts ready," and they were off. An instant Miss Denny returned for her handkerchief, when Miss Mettle remarked:

"You had better take care and not chatter so loud that Mr. Grassey cannot hear his man telling him which way to pull his lines. Ha! ha!"

"There is nothing so delightful as a ride with thee, oh, thou perfect embodiment in human shape of stupidity, inanity, and—what was the third attribute?" said Mr. Grout, quoting from Miss Denny's recent apostrophe.

That high-minded personage gave a knowing wink and whispered:

"Did you ever see any one who could swallow so much soft soap at a given time? But I'd rather ride with a monkey than to stay at home."

The result of this departure was that I had to be taken from the task of ripping the window hangings, which had been injured by the water, and set to work upon the accounts. Thus it happened that I was forced to be present when the august body called the committee assembled. Twelve was their number, six ladies and six gentlemen. An hour after the time appointed one and another began to arrive. The ladies fluttered in like butterflies after a new flower. The term "flutter" is particularly appropriate in

this case, for they came in, in a hurry, their silks, satins, moires, brocades and laces giving the sound of movement in quick vibration.

At the risk of being thought both envious and critical, I must say the toilets of these several ladies filled me with consternation and dismay to think how human ingenuity must be taxed to produce such fearful and wonderful constructions. It did not strike me as at all singular that the science of conversation should be disappearing. How could a person be expected to have any mind left for conversation when she is surrounded by toilets whose mysteries of construction seem to demand a solution?

Miss Mettle and Miss Hopper began the exercises by a series of brief but exceedingly pointed remarks as to what had become of Miss Hopper's notes, but these were brought to a close by Miss Hopper's being able, after long and painful efforts, to find her pocket where she had placed the documents. As is customary in such meetings, the secretary's notes received the first attention. Miss Hopper did not confine herself to technical terms or to the simple forms prescribed by parliamentary usage in writing her reports. She introduced noble metaphors where an ordinary phrase would have been preferable, she left out all mention of Miss Mettle where she possibly could, and when she must perforce mention her it was briefly, sometimes sneeringly done.

The spirit of the rest of the committee did not seem to be much more benign than that of their two principal officers.

"I think we are doing too much for the working girls, in spending our days" (they had been together just twenty minutes) "as well as our evenings. I have to come around again this week some time," whispered one young lady to her neighbor.

"Well, I can just tell you what it is!" replied the one addressed, whose name was Miss Leonora Bullwinkle, "if Ray Mettle does not invite me to her next musical for all this I'm doing, the working girl can club it for herself hereafter, as far as I am concerned."

"I want to draw your attention to a very important matter," said Miss Mettle after I had read the treasurer's report, which had an astonishing array of figures on the wrong side of the page, "and that is, our lack of funds. In exact figures, Mrs. Winn, how much do we owe?"

"Two thousand three hundred and sixty-eight dollars and fifty-nine cents," I replied.

"And how much is there subscribed?" she asked again.

"Three thousand and ten dollars."

"Now, you see, we have enough pledged, but on account of this accident we shall have to collect as soon as possible, so I am going to begin with the list of subscribers and ask each one of you how early you can send the amount. Miss Rounds, yours is the first name."

"I sent in my check a week ago!" exclaimed that lady, indignantly.

"See if there is any cross at her name or other indication that Miss Denny received the money," said Miss Mettle to me in an aside.

But no; I looked faithfully, and there was no sign of the sum having been received.

"Did Miss Denny give you a receipt?" asked Miss Mettle.

"Of course not. Do you think I'd stoop to take a receipt for what I gave in charity? But I see you don't believe me, and I am not in the habit of being doubted," and Miss Rounds was about to withdraw, when I happened to think that there were some stray papers in the waste-basket which might be looked over.

"Wait a minute," I said, "perhaps the check can be found," and my search was rewarded by the missing paper.

"You will have to look after the accounts, Mrs. Winn," said Miss Mettle.

"I don't see why Grace Denny should have help in *her* work and I have none in *mine*," returned Miss Hopper, pouting.

"Both of you need nurses!" exclaimed Miss Mettle, sympathetically.

With all her powers of persuasion Miss Mettle could only raise one thousand dollars, which left thirteen hundred and sixty-eight on the old debts and nothing for repairs.

"Miss Mettle, I have a plan to suggest." The speaker was a young rector, a spare, thin-faced man with an ungainly figure which became absolutely uncomfortable to look at because of its owner's self-consciousness of his defects in a physical point of view, though from other standpoints, that of birth for instance, his importance was greatly exaggerated. For was he not the son of a bishop and were not his aspirations as high as any small-souled man's could possibly be?

Miss Mettle was all attention.

"And what is your plan?" she asked.

The rector adjusted his glasses and cleared his throat as he replied:

"Perhaps when you hear it you will be reminded of Ezekiel's vision of the wheels within wheels, as the plan proposes a charity within a charity. I have three thousand dollars which has been given me for my mission. I will call a meeting of my warden and vestrymen to make arrangements to let you have the sum, providing you will agree to pay us a little larger rate of interest than is

usually demanded, say twenty-five or thirty per cent. This would seem exorbitant for any other than benevolent purposes. But when you consider that by making this arrangement you relieve yourselves of present embarrassment at the same time that you assist in prosecuting a good work in another part of the city, it puts a different face on the plan."

A wave of different emotions seemed to sweep over the company. Mr. K. Roundout Grout raised his eyebrows suspiciously and puckered up his lips as though it would relieve him greatly if he could only give a prolonged whistle. Several ladies in the vicinity of the rector looked disapprovingly. Miss Hopper said:

"I protest against burdening this society with such a debt. A friend of mine out in California has written me at great length about his experience in enterprises of this kind, and he emphasizes keeping out of debt. His expression was, 'Laden a ship with a cargo of debt if you wish to sink it.'"

The young ladies who looked disapprovingly nodded their assent to these words. An exceedingly pronounced type of blonde sitting next to the rector, whose only interest in the proceedings so far had appeared to consist in twirling her eyeglasses and gazing in mute admiration at her neighbor, was roused to activity. Her powers of conversation were limited, but she ejaculated:

"Unsafe investment, rector! Worse than mines or the Sutro tunnel!"

Miss Mettle turned sharply to this speaker and said:

"Miss Nevins, I don't understand your invidious remark! I have reason to believe you have some personal interest at stake which makes you wish to prejudice the rector."

For a moment these two looked at each other with that

peculiarly fond glance with which young women are wont to regard each other when a rivalry is about to commence between them.

"But, Miss Mettle," spoke the deep-voiced K. Round-out Grout, "your society is not incorporated, so it would be impossible for it to borrow or lend."

"Oh, that need be no objection," returned the rector. "Miss Mettle's father is sufficiently well known, so that I would not care for the signature of the society."

"But do you think it a good plan to start out so heavily burdened?" asked Miss Hopper. "If Ray Mettle is inclined to borrow that money herself for the club I would not say a word, but I know her. The rest of us would be made to suffer if the twenty-five per cent. interest——"

"Or thirty per cent., I think I said," replied the rector.

"Well, thirty, then," resumed Miss Hopper, "was not forthcoming whenever it was due. And no one enjoys being badgered."

"Can you furnish the two thousand that must be had to carry on the enterprise?" asked Miss Mettle.

"No, of course I cannot," said Miss Hopper; "but *you* can, and it would be a great deal simpler to have it come in that way than in any other."

Miss Mettle had a difficult task before her. Borrow that money she was determined, with all the determination of her character, which we have already seen was something masterful. But to be solely responsible for it she was equally determined she would not, as she inherited from her mother a penurious disposition.

I looked on with no little interest, having been present in the morning when the encounter between herself and mother took place. I could not help wondering whether she would come out of the present fray as successfully as then.

She first attacked the member of Congress. Taking a sheet of paper and a pencil, she demanded that he head the list with his name. This at first he refused to do, although it was easy to be seen that he was in an undecided state. Finally a mutual understanding was reached and Miss Mettle triumphantly flourished the paper with his name before the eyes of the rest of the company.

She next approached Miss Leonora Bullwinkle, the young lady who cherished the ardent longings in regard to her *musicales*. Not much ammunition was necessary to bring her into a state of subjection. A brewer's daughter (or, as the family preferred to be known, the daughter of a retired malt-broker), with the steep hill of social distinction to climb, could afford to be responsible for many times three thousand dollars rather than offend any one who could assist her in her arduous undertaking.

Finally every one's name on the committee had been secured except Miss Nevin's and Miss Hopper's. It was growing dusk and these two remained obdurate. But Miss Mettle had turned the key in the door, and, holding it in her hand, had assured them that darkest night might come and they would still be prisoners if they did not yield. We were all sitting round a handsome leather-covered table, the conversation between those who had signed the paper and those who had not being of the usual fervent, impassioned style of oratory carried on by opponents, when a sudden explosive sound interrupted remark, and we saw a small piece of plastering from the ceiling on the table before us. The water of the evening previous had loosened the hold of the plastering on the laths overhead.

With one accord we moved back from the table, intending to take refuge in precipitate flight. But before we could carry out our design a sheet, large enough to give us

all a sharp rap on the head and cover us with dust and dirt, descended.

"The key! Where is the key?" shouted a half-dozen voices at once.

Miss Mettle had unintentionally and most unfortunately dropped this important aid to freedom, and her efforts to search around while she exhorted Miss Nevin and Miss Hopper bordered on the heroic.

"Now you see what discomfort you have brought upon us! If you had signed that paper when you ought we should have been out of here when this happened."

"Where is the paper? I will sign it, or do anything else you want," whimpered Miss Nevins, "if I can only be allowed to leave this place."

"For shame, Lena Nevins, to give in that way!" said the sturdy and indomitable Miss Hopper.

The paper was found to be completely riddled, as if the plastering had decided objections to the existence of a document composed at the point of the sword, so to speak.

The rector saw Miss Mettle's dismay, and said:

"Never mind; you know I do not care for all those names. Yours will do."

The search for the key being unsuccessful, confusion reigned supreme. Mr. K. Roundout Grout, true to his instincts of the duty of self-preservation, was banging and kicking at the door, which raised such an insuperable barrier against flight. Two or three of the young ladies were leaning out of the window and calling to policemen, who, not being within call, could not respond, and the deep roar of the city's din made the shrieks they uttered sound extremely attenuated.

Finally the heroic Mr. Grout's efforts were rewarded and a panel of the door giving way, Miss Hopper, as the smallest number of the party, was able to get out and bring assistance.

CHAPTER V.

CARPENTERS MAY COME AND CARPENTERS MAY GO, BUT OUR STORY GOES ON (LET US HOPE NOT QUITE) FOREVER.

I HAD expected to have the opening week and perhaps the first month of my engaging in a new occupation full of trying experiences, and if any of my readers think, after perusing a history of that time that I failed to realize my expectations I shall conclude there is something out of joint with their conception of what trying experiences really are.

In the first place I must tell my friends that I am by nature systematic to a fault. My life in school had served to increase all such tendencies. I had risen, breakfasted, taught, dined, walked, supped and retired for ten years by the clock. There was no other countenance that inspired me with such ambition and stimulated me to so much endeavor as the dear old battered face of the schoolroom clock. But now, I might just as well not have had any time piece except to keep account of the time I wasted in waiting for everybody.

The morning after the committee-meeting my dressing was interrupted by heavy knocks on the outside door and to my question "Who's there?" came the answer, "We's the workmin." I soon completed my toilet and opened the door.

"I suppose you know what you are to do," I said.

"'Dade thin we do not," replied the leader.

"Who engaged you?" I asked.

"Well, there wuz three gals of 'em an' they sid as how they'd all be on hand to tell us what they wanted done."

Nothing had been said to me about directing affairs, so I felt that it would be officious to offer suggestions. The men took up their station in the hall singing, telling stories, and laughing at their witty and witless remarks until a boy appeared with a note from persons below who angrily asked me what I meant by allowing such an uproar.

When I remonstrated with the men they promised to do better, but forgot in a few minutes their promises and I constantly had to talk to them until nearly eleven o'clock. I was just on the point of sending them away when Miss Hopper appeared. Her ruddy face grew several shades more ruddy and her large, full, light blue eyes, which always gave the impression of starting from their sockets, looked several sizes larger than usual. Miss Hopper was one of those short, stout young ladies who make it a point to build themselves skyward with tall hats, hair done up high on the head, feather tips and various other feminine devices. Her manners and general bearing always brought before my mental vision a steam-tug, noisy and blustering, whose attempts at an assumption of dignity were very amusing in view of its size. In the present instance she put on her most stern and awful demeanor as she looked at the men and said:

"Why are you not inside at work?"

"Faith and you're a purtty un to ax us that question when we're bin here since seven o'clock waiting for you to tell us what you wanted done."

"Mrs. Winn, I suppose your duties have been too pressing (though I am sure I don't know what they can be) for you to give these men a few directions."

"Indeed, you are mistaken, Miss Hopper. I should have

much preferred to set these men to work if I had been sure I knew what you wanted, than to have endured the noise and confusion of their idleness. But there were no orders given."

"Some people are very particular about orders when the work is not to their liking. I guess you won't stop for orders when it comes time to draw your salary, no matter whether you've done anything to earn it or not."

"Miss Hopper, there is a very simple and effective remedy you are always able to use, in case you are not satisfied with my services."

"Who's not satisfied with your services?" interrupted Miss Denny, dancing in and turning a circle on one toe. "Has Annie Hopper told you she was not satisfied with your services? My senses alive! You can't pay any attention to her! She is not happy unless she is fighting somebody and discharging them and taking them back. She did not have the say about engaging you and I guess she can't discharge you, but while you are settling your affairs I will set these men to work."

So saying in her most airy manner she went to the workmen and said:

"Well, my good fellows, you are ready for work I see. What are your names?"

"Och, bless her for a swatespoken Miss that she is," exclaimed the leader; "so much more civil than the other two fatties. Why, his name is Mick Dooley, and that un's Tim O'Harar, and mine's Patrick Brodigan O'Flanagan, your humble sarvant," and he pulled off his cap and bowed low.

"Well, Mr. Patrick Brodigan O'Flanagan, do you understand repairing?"

"That I does and no one can bate me. I can repair everything, even to broken hearts, so they'll look just like new and last twict as long."

"There is nothing in the broken heart line to-day, though I wish there were so that I could test your ability; but here is this room damaged by fire and water. You see it needs repairing in various places," and she gave a graceful sweep with her hand, a motion the elocution master had taken great trouble to perfect her in and which she now used on every occasion, from issuing an order about the pudding for dinner to the most frenzied passages in "The Maniac," her favorite recitation.

The three men stood staring at her with the open but not intellectual countenances worn by Irishmen in a quandary. They evidently were unused to the type to which Miss Denny belonged—that might be called the fantastico—affected.

But Patrick soon collected himself and said:

"Yis, repairing I should think it naded, bad enough. But there's mor'n one way to sit to work. Does ye's want——"

"Oh, that is a matter of perfect indifference. Just repair it. Do you hear? Repair it. Set right to work and have it repaired by to-morrow at four."

"Howly Mither! I should think 'twas a pair of shoes she was talkin' about to be repaired by to-morrow at four," exclaimed Patrick.

"A matter of indifference how it's done!" broke in Miss Hopper. "Grace Denny, if I did not have any more gumption than to give such orders as that, I'd advertise for a little to be delivered at once. Here, man," turning to the workman, "you see that arch over there where the woodwork is destroyed; we want you to begin there and use the same kind of wood in veneer but any kind of cheap stuff will do for underneath. Look at the other arch; we want you to preserve the same continuity in the one as in the other."

"We don't do no presarvin'!" exclaimed Patrick, "we's workmin used to carpentering but we lave the presarving to the wimin."

"Dolt!" exclaimed Miss Hopper amid the laughter and clapping of hands of Miss Denny, who in a loud sotto voce, said:

"If I did not have the gumption to know the difference between a workman and a professor and adapt my conversation accordingly I'd advertise for a little to be delivered at once."

Miss Hopper proceeded to simplify her remarks and to add to her instructions until the workmen's faces looked clearer, and when they had commenced operations the two young ladies withdrew.

Just after the hour of noon when the men had resumed their labors I heard some one come up the stairs and as she entered the rooms a loud exclamation of wrath caused me to enter in order to learn the reason.

It was Miss Mettle with her cold, steel eyes shooting forth such rays of sharp reproof and rage that if they had been as steely as they looked I should have been perforated and lifeless in five minutes.

"Mrs. Winn, what does this mean?" pointing to the men at work on the arch. "I have a great mind to discharge you on the spot. How dared you set those men to work without any orders from *me*? Not a word" (as I tried to tell her who gave the men their orders). "It is bad enough to see all this mischief done—the time of these men wasted—to say nothing of the beautiful plans I had made nearly spoiled without having you make matters worse by excuses. There's *no* excuse. What excuse can you have for being so officious? Do you think we engaged you to order everything about this club? If so we should have asked you to be president, secretary and treasurer."

I remained silent until Miss Mettle had exhausted her vituperative powers when I said calmly:

"There is no necessity of my making any excuses for setting these men at work for the very simple reason that I had nothing to do with it. Miss Hopper and Miss Denny performed that officious act some time since. These men came here and waited for hours with nothing to do. Workmen have the unfortunate habit of beginning their day's labor before two o'clock in the afternoon and if you wish to give them orders it is well to be on hand a little earlier."

"Earlier! this is plenty early enough if they had begun on the floor instead of the arch as any sensible person would have made them. Now that arch must not be finished in that shape (to the men). It is not the fashion to have the two alike. I want you to give this one more of the Moorish curve like this picture," and she produced a magazine with a cut representing one of the arches of the Alhambra.

At the end of the second day those workmen packed up their tools and left and Patrick said:

"'Dade, thin, me hid is schplit entoirlee tryin' to remember which of all thim orders must be tinded to and which you must lave alone. I wuz always a doin' of what I ought to lave, thet I wuz! And, thim Moorish arches are not fit fur a dacent white man to walk undernath, let alone help to make hathenish fixin's all over thim. May the howly mither forgive me for doin' as much as I have!

Crossing himself devoutly in order to counteract any evil influence that might remain from the effects of yielding to the sin of copying the "hathenish fixin's," Patrick and his two companions passed out into the street.

Although I did not wish to violate any one's religious scruples by having him engage in an occupation of which

his conscience did not approve, it would have been a great convenience to me if Patrick had made his scruples known a few minutes earlier.

Miss Mettle had just gone home to get ready for a large dinner and Miss Hopper and Miss Denny I knew were gone with a party on a tally-ho for an excursion to Tremont. The only thing for me to do was to write a note and take it up to Miss Mettle and ask the servant to give it to her with her early morning mail. This had the effect of bringing the young lady to the rooms in the middle of the forenoon following in a great rage. She abused carpenters in general and the three that had gone off so suddenly in particular. She bemoaned her lot as the most persecuted of mortals because she had to come out so early; it was so thoroughly unladylike to be seen abroad before noon, she declared.

"Mrs. Winn, my maid was busy this morning and so you may go down town now to look up some more men."

"What did you say?" I asked, not willing to trust to the testimony of my senses without a repetition of the message.

Miss Mettle repeated her permission, my eyes fixed on her the while to see if there was any inclination of shame or blush of confusion at asking a lady to take a servant's place with such needless effrontery. But I will leave it to be decided by some more unprejudiced judge than myself whether there is anything in the heavens above, the earth beneath or the waters under the earth, bolder, more unscrupulous and altogether destitute of any trace of common humanity than the effrontery of a fashionable man or woman.

Miss Mettle answered my look by adding: "Oh, you may go in the same car or stage with me, but of course you'll sit at the further end."

"Certainly, the farther the better," I replied.

We got into a car in which a lady was sitting whom I had known and admired while connected with the school I have already mentioned. That she was some one influential in social circles I inferred from the great agitation Miss Mettle displayed at sight of her. She was so charmed to meet her. She remembered with such transports of delight their last meeting at the Rydensnyfer's reception. Between each of her remarks occurred a little stony, false laugh which was quite in keeping with the sharp steely look from her eyes.

After talking a few minutes with Miss Mettle Mrs. Conrad excused herself and said there was some one in the farther end of the car she wished to see, and my surprise and gratification may be better imagined than described when I say the "some one" was none other than my own poor despised self.

Ah, who can measure the good done by a kindly shake of the hand and an inquiry prompted by genuine good will for the health and happiness of another? Heaven must look with approving eyes on all Mrs. Conrads, who will leave the society of the prosperous and influential to speak a word of cheer to the obscure. When we were leaving the car she said to Miss Mettle:

"You ought to have great success in your undertaking with such an energetic, faithful helper as Mrs. Winn."

My heart was too full for utterance. I could only press this dear lady's hand and look the thanks I dare not trust myself to speak.

As we reached the sidewalk Miss Mettle said pettishly: "Why didn't you tell me you knew the Conrads and I'd have let you sit by me. You did not tell her I asked you to take the place of my maid, did you?"

"Of course not," I replied. "I should have been very

sorry to have her think you were capable of such snobbishness."

"I want to get her interested in my Working Girls' Club," replied Miss Mettle, ignoring the latter part of my remark. "She has charming entertainments at her beautiful home on Fifth avenue and I'd like to have her offer to give one to raise money for our enterprise. There would be sure to be a lot of money made."

We had a weary time getting workmen to take the places of those who had left. Miss Mettle would not allow of any contractor or overseer, as she wished to have the entire control of the men herself and it was hard to find capable men who could be had on such terms. But at last they were secured and they promised to be on hand at two o'clock that very afternoon.

I have already alluded to the conspicuous location of the club rooms. They were on a corner of Fifth avenue.

After securing our men Miss Mettle called a cab as the quickest means of reaching home. We were driven up the avenue and as we approached our street Miss Mettle was saying:

"Well, Mrs. Winn, I think I will go home for my lunch and return immediately and don't let any one in, not even Miss Hopper or Grace Denny——" when her eye glancing up to the window caught sight of persons within. She followed me out of the cab and dismissed the driver.

"Did you lock the rooms when we left them?"

"Yes," I answered, "and here are my keys."

We could not imagine what was happening, for as we ascended the stairs there was the sound of pounding and hammering, together with the chattering of ladies' voices accompanied by the ponderous tones of manly bass. When the door opened and revealed the true state of the case my first inclination was to get behind something that would

shield me from the fragments which I felt sure Miss Mettle's rage would send flying in every direction. For there were workmen as industriously plying their tools as though the combined authority of the three heads of the enterprise had set them the task, and one of the men was even giving the "hathenish fixin's" on the Moorish arch a singularly civilized air.

Around a table which I recognized as being taken from my room, with its drawer eliminated, were Misses Hopper and Denny with Messrs. Grassey and Grout playing whist. Miss Hopper threw a most exasperating glance of mingled triumph and complacency in Miss Mettle's direction as she called out:

"It is your turn to play, Mr. Grout."

But that that gentleman's state of mind was not perfectly calm was evidenced by the play he made which was greeted by Miss Denny with an exclamation of horror.

"To think of such an atrocious play! Trumping my ace!"

But what did the strange calm in Miss Mettle's demeanor portend? Her steel-grey eye took in the situation at a glance, even the man working at her favorite arch, but to my unspeakable amazement she betrayed not the slightest emotion. Could it be that this was such a stillness as people in the tropics describe as the forerunner of their most destructive hurricanes? I think Miss Hopper and Miss Denny must have had similar fears for they began to make explanations.

"Was it not strange, Ray," Miss Denny asked, "these men just happened along? We had stopped at your house on our way down and heard from your mother how Patrick Brodigan O'Flanagan and his associates had withdrawn and——"

"And they have proved themselves excellent workmen,"

interrupted Miss Hopper, "for we have remained here to watch them and we are entirely satisfied with the results of their labor. I think you ought to feel very grateful to us for engaging such superior men."

Still not a word from Miss Mettle while the man at work on the Moorish arch could be heard chip, chip, as he chiselled away at the "hathenish fixin's." She waited around a short time, making a few indifferent remarks, and then withdrew.

Mr. Grout tried to follow her but the game of whist was not finished and Miss Denny would not let him off. Finally, however, they all left, and I was free to pick up my table, put the drawer in its place, arrange my upset work basket and replace my writing desk, which had been on the floor.

I mentally went over the events of the morning—waxing wrathful at the cool impertinence of Miss Mettle's permission to ride in the same car; melting under the kindness of dear Mrs. Conrad; transported with astonishment at the rare phenomenon of Miss Mettle's composure under what I knew was to her great provocation. "How was she going to manage?" I kept asking myself. Here were these men who, by the way, seemed to me very far from "superior," as I had kept my door open and had caught them handling some of the rugs in a very suspicious way and there were the other men who were to come, now, within an hour. How could she get rid of the first in time to prevent a collision? For she did not deceive me by her calmness into thinking she was intending to submit quietly to have her plans interfered with.

As I was in the midst of my profound meditations on this score the door opened and Miss Mettle walked in. She looked around to see what the men were doing and finding

them quietly at work she asked if she could come into my room.

"Don't you think, Mrs. Winn," she said in a suppressed tone of voice, but still loud enough to be heard in the adjoining room, "it was very fortunate we were able to get men to work in rooms where there had been smallpox? A great many men you know are afraid of smallpox, but these men I think must have been vaccinated recently or else had the disease before."

The stillness as of death that greeted the first remark was interrupted before she reached the close of her last sentence by a clattering of tin dinner-pails, a hustling round after coats and hats, a dropping and picking up of tools and a rapid scampering downstairs amid ejaculations of "Och, wait for me!" "The devil or the smallpox; there's small choice between thim."

"There could not anything act more like a charm than that, eh, Mrs. Winn?" asked Miss Mettle triumphantly.

"You have carried your point certainly," I replied, "but it's a very expensive victory. It has cost you the truth."

Miss Mettle was just about to argue this point with me when she was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Grout. He was panting and looked considerably disturbed.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "I was passing the street door just now and those carpenters Miss Hopper engaged came tumbling on to the sidewalk, just as if they had been shot out of a cannon. One of them ran into me and knocked me over into the gutter. Before I could pick myself up and get hold of him to teach him better manners he and his companions had scratched off muttering something about smallpox, and as I thought they had gone crazy I came up here to find out what it all meant. But I did not suppose I should be so fortunate as to find *you* here."

This with a tender sigh and expressive look at Miss Mettle. That young lady put on her most frigid manner. "No, I presume you hoped Miss Hopper and Miss Denny would have returned for another game of whist."

"What! do you think I came to see *them* this morning?" with a vehement emphasis on them. "You know that there is only one person who has any charms for me—only one star that sheds its rays on the midnight blackness of my desolated life. That person and that star is your own—may I say it?—*dear* self."

"Humph! I am not so dear but you could help others to do what you knew I should not like!"

"Why, what do you refer to? Engaging those men this morning? Positively," and here Mr. Grout used the full force of his capacious lung power, "they had commenced work before I arrived. Mr. Grassey had taken me for a ride in the park and on our return we strolled in here to see how nearly finished the rooms were and we found those men at work. But, zounds! if I'd known they were here without your approval I would have pitched 'em out neck and heels before you could have winked. Yet it seems to me it did not take you long to dispose of them. How did you manage it?"

Miss Mettle unbent a little as she narrated her crafty artifice and together they laughed at the speedy effect it produced.

"Oh, Miss Mettle, you are so clever!" exclaimed her admirer enthusiastically. "It is no wonder I feel drawn toward you. Like always seeks like. I suffered in that respect in the companion of my first choice. She was a good woman" (then the thought of her disposal of her property flashing through his mind, he added), "a *moderately* good woman, but, oh, when I compare you with her it is

just as though I should place a brilliant diamond of the first water next a piece of plain glass."

"But how did it happen that such a connoisseur as you are, failed to discover the glass before it was too late?"

"Well, for some reason, I do not know what it is, I am very attractive to the ladies——"

"*Some* ladies, please say," interrupted Miss Mettle.

"Ah! yes, indeed, that is true. I should not be such a wretched man if I could attract the only one I cared about. But to return to the reason of my first choice. I am very attractive, if I do say it who should not, and before I knew it I found my first wife was desperately in love with me. I was young and inexperienced then and I imagined it was every one's duty to try and relieve the distresses of their fellow men and women, even at the sacrifice of their own pleasure."

It is a wonder Mrs. Grout did not rise from her last resting place and appear before her base spouse, and with her cold finger pointed in scorn ask him how it happened that if she was so desperately in love with him her father had to exhort and threaten in order to get her to marry him, and furthermore ask him if he had not put the youth and inexperience on the wrong side, inasmuch as she was only just out of school when the ceremony took place.

But she did nothing of the sort and Mr. Grout continued his family history, drawing the most flattering and pathetic pictures of his own crushed existence while like an eagle he found himself mated with a hen, and that a very common one.

Miss Mettle was not much interested in hearing him enlarge on his own family history, after her curiosity had been satisfied, so she would recall him to the present when his fulsome praises of herself and her enterprises were

enough to sicken any one not possessing an abnormally large capacity for adulation.

Perhaps some of my readers may be interested to know where I was during this deeply affecting interview. Some of the time I was in my own room and again I was in the same apartment with the speakers. To Mr. Grout space, vacuity and myself were looked upon as identical. A room occupied only by me was empty in his estimation and the idea of bowing to or recognizing me or stopping whistling or humming in my presence he would have scouted at as worse than the silly vagaries of crazy persons who address creatures of their imagination. Hence I felt at liberty to go or come as I pleased, which was a state of affairs with its advantages, especially when there were duties to be accomplished in the room he occupied.

"It is such a noble undertaking, this girls' club!" exclaimed the deep, rich bass fervently, "but a great responsibility. You need some one to help you share it;" this in the tenderest, most insinuating manner.

"You think so, do you?" asked Miss Mettle coquetting. "Somebody with experience in ministerial affairs, eh?"

"Ugh! that viper of a rector! There is nothing but poisonous stings awaiting the person who places any confidence in him. If the air does not become thick with your maledictions on his head before you get through paying him his thirty per cent. I shall be greatly mistaken."

"I shall pay him his thirty per cent. interest when I am perfectly ready and not before. And if you cared for me as you pretend you would pay up your two hundred dollars subscription and lend me the money to pay back the rector at no per cent."

That was an announcement which took the breath out of the body of the august member of Congress for at least two minutes. It was such a complete reversing of the order of

proceedings he had mapped out in his mind. He hoped Miss Mettle might be persuaded to show her affection for him by the amount she lent him, and here—but he was used to having things work contrary—there was his mother-in-law working contrary for the past year! He felt it was rather hard on a man to have affairs take such an unfortunate turn. Still he did not feel discouraged. But he was plunged in deep reflection and his mood of love-making was dispelled.

I have time and space only to give one more incident in connection with the uncomfortable days of repairing and making ready for the work of the season.

When Miss Mettle and I engaged the workmen who were to take the places of Patrick Brodigan O'Flanagan and his associates we noticed that they were Germans, but both Miss Mettle and myself were acquainted with that tongue, so we succeeded in making ourselves understood, and if we could have foreseen what an amount of interference they were to be saved by their ignorance of the English language we should have had less hesitation in making the engagement. The next morning the premises were visited by the city board of health, to whom the flying carpenters had reported what they had heard in regard to the smallpox. That would have been enough to have frightened the new men away had they understood English. Then later in the day Miss Hopper appeared. What prevented her jugular vein from bursting and the veins in her forehead from becoming useless as unbroken passages for the blood will always be a mystery to me. She looked at those men as though she was ready to devour them one and all on the spot.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, stamping her foot imperiously at the largest of the stolid looking Dutchmen. He surveyed her much as one would imagine the ox

in the fable looked at the fly, with an amused expression, saying, "Yah—so."

"But you have no business to be here," she continued nearly choking with rage. "Who engaged you? Mrs. Winn! Mrs. Winn!" But I had discreetly withdrawn.

There is little use in trying to describe the countenance of the German carpenter so full of undisturbed amusement.

"Das ist richt!" he nodded by way of encouragement.

"Stop, stop, aretteez, aretteez (oh, what is the nasty old German for stop); you must not work any more. I'll have you all arrested and put in prison and have your heads chopped off. Do you hear?"

"Yah—so," returned the imperturbable German.

"Well, I'll just go home and get my German phrasebook, and I'll come back and make your hair rise."

So saying she left them but she changed her mind about returning with her phrasebook.

CHAPTER VI.

EX-CONGRESSMAN K. ROUNDOUT GROUT'S EARLY LIFE.

IN ORDER to the proper comprehension of the events which will be recorded in these pages it is necessary to take a bird's-eye view of the previous history of that eminent individual who has been introduced to the reader under the highly euphonious title of Mr. K. Roundout Grout.

In his personal appearance there was nothing to distinguish him from a large class of florid-faced, corpulent, bald-headed gentlemen, whose coarseness of hair and complexion give a true index to their characters.

If equal parts of vanity, pomposity, ignorance, selfishness, unscrupulous over-reaching, cowardice, tyrannical interference, with a pinch of good nature and a small dusting of humor, could be compounded the moral part of this gentleman would be the result. It is not a cheerful reflection to think in whose workshop such compounds are constantly in great numbers being prepared.

It became a fundamental principle with young Grout when he arrived at years of discretion to make himself a fortune with as little labor as possible. He was born in a small town in New Hampshire and his father pursued the honest but laborious calling of a cobbler. His mother was a vain, partial woman, who thought she discovered in her eldest son, Knox, those latent but phenomenal qualities which one day would be sure to bring him to the White House as chief executive of the nation.

She, therefore, set about, after the fashion of many another fond parent, making her son just as unfit for any position of honor as it was possible, by allowing him his way in everything, making his brothers and sisters accede to his slightest expressed wish and using all of the family exchequer that could be spared for his more extravagant tastes. The main foundations upon which she erected her brilliant air castles for the future of her son were his dashing manners and deep, resonant voice.

It is unnecessary to follow the career of this gentleman previous to his entrance into the Islip household, which was effected in the following manner.

Forty-second street was just beginning to develop into the wonderful thoroughfare it is to-day. Vacant lots marred the beauty of its present unbroken lines of brick and mortar, but the ceaseless flow of humanity to and from the railroad center, as waters from some hidden mysterious spring, was then as now a marked characteristic of this spacious street. An unusual throng was surging to and fro one day when young Grout was walking toward the depot, undecided as to whether to remain in the city, where his fortunes had been fluctuating and of late very bad, or return to his native village and work at his father's cobbler's bench.

Suddenly a scuffle between two men disturbed the even passage of pedestrians and a sharp cry of "Stop him! Stop the villain! He's robbed me!" as one of the men broke away from the other sent a cold chill through the frames of passers-by. We have seen how the first instinct of the Grout of the period in which this story was written was to ply his heels when danger threatened, and how much more that was his policy earlier in life this incident will prove.

If he had run along with the crowd the consequences

might not have been what they were; but it never seemed to occur to him to try to accomplish anything by his flight except to get out of harm's way, else he would have thought of trying to capture the rogue about whom there was such an outcry. A vacant lot a little in front of him seemed to offer speedy means of getting away from danger, so across this place he dashed. Policemen have to bear a great deal of blame, but no person can feel that the officer was culpable who, hearing an outcry of "Stop, thief!" and seeing a man make frantic efforts to get away from something, proceeded on the conviction that the thief and the runaway were the same person. In consequence of such reasoning on the part of an officer our runaway hero was walked off to a station house to await the arrival of his accuser.

"Do you recognize in the prisoner at the bar the clerk who absconded with your property?" asked the judge of a man under medium height, evidently a gentleman, as that term is used to denote property and social position.

"Oh, no; no, certainly not!" he replied in an unsteady voice.

"There, didn't I tell you!" roared Grout in his deepest, most stentorian tones, which caused Mr. Islip, the gentleman before him, to jump violently. "And do you think I shall submit without restitution to such ignominious treatment? Here I have lost my train, my plans are all disarranged, business upset," etc., etc., thundered young Grout, and the more he perceived that his hearer was impressed with his oratorical powers the more vigorously he used them, until Mr. Islip drew out a twenty-dollar bill and, handing it to him, asked his aggrieved highness to dinner.

This proved the tide in the affairs of young Grout which he took at the flood and it led him to fortune.

He omitted nothing that might, however remotely, affect his upward progress.

At the dinner to which Mr. Islip invited him the host became so communicative (as the result of an extra potation of French brandy) he confided to Grout the secret of the quarrel between himself and his clerk. There was an invention left in Mr. Islip's care by a sick friend. The friend would in all probability die and Mr. Islip with his clerk had started for Albany to obtain a patent without waiting for the final act in his life's tragedy. The clerk, thinking the profits of this invention would be better suited to his requirements undivided, took the clumsy way of appropriating them we have already described. But he was unsuccessful. His pursuers were so close upon him he dropped the parcel containing the invention to save himself. Mr. Islip's suggestion that young Grout take the place of the missing clerk was readily acceded to. The two men visited first Albany and then Washington and speedily completed the arrangements for bringing the invention before the public. For a short season the returns from this business venture were more than they expected. Mr. Grout, who was about thirty-five, married the only child of his senior partner and was established in a handsome brownstone house on Madison avenue.

But no sooner did he find himself thus comfortably settled than he began to be visited by longings for a seat in his country's legislative halls. Of course patriotism pure and simple could be the only motive to operate with a man of such high principles as we have shown this young man to be. We have pointed out how eager he had always been for hard work, so undoubtedly he desired the position that he might achieve some noble reform; or with his indifference to gain he might have wished

to protect the public treasury from those unscrupulous persons who blossom out into millionaires after but a short planting in the soil adjacent to the public bins. Whatever were his motives, the accomplishment of his object he found to be no easy task. In the fashionable world he had taken his place in the very foremost rank. Indeed few would have cared to have stood in front of him and had their heels exposed to his merciless tread; but it was hard for him nevertheless to inspire the unfashionable world (which, by the way, is much the larger) with confidence. Not that he withheld any of his wife's money that he could get hold of at election time. No one could accuse him of parsimony then, whatever they might think of him when household expenses were to be settled. Indeed his fondness for the gaming table and for congressional honors had brought the family to the brink of bankruptcy many a time and the Islip family were convinced that Mrs. Grout's years were shamefully shortened by the discovery, after her husband's announcement of his success at a certain election, that very little remained to the family beside the house and furniture. But that good lady retaliated by not closing her eyes on earthly scenes until she had secured every remaining cent to her boy, a baby of two years, and appointing her father as his guardian.

Thus the Honorable K. Roundout Grout finds himself in about as tight a place in regard to money when our story opens as any he had been called upon to fill during his varied and oftentimes penniless career. The torturing thought assails him once and again, "Shall I be driven to working on a salary?" He was not troubled by the companion thought, "But whom can I find with mind sufficiently weakened to offer me a place?" If he had

asked himself that question he must have been forced to answer, "Nobody but my father-in-law."

That worthy relative rented the house once occupied by his daughter and her husband and applied the proceeds faithfully to the future enrichment of his grandchild. The money from the stolen patent did not continue to flow in very regularly, for the friend did not die as he had predicted, but lived a feeble invalid; and even though he was cumbered with poverty and feeble health the litigation he was able to keep up prevented the continuation of the rich money harvest. The name of this friend remained a secret within the breast of Mr. Islip.

CHAPTER VII.

AGNES DEARBORN LOSES A POSITION, BUT FINDS A LOVER.

MY INTEREST and admiration for Agnes Dearborn increased with every interview. The chord she struck in my being was far different from any that had been set vibrating before, for although I had made warm friends among my pupils while a teacher there had always been lacking the element of dependence on their part and protection on mine which adds unspeakable sweetness to such relations.

The oases in the desert of my uncomfortable life at this time were those seasons when I was allowed refreshing draughts of sincere friendship from companionship with this dear girl. Looking in her eyes I felt them to be my twin north stars, which cheered and brought me hope and courage in spite of storm and tempest. Truly I felt like exclaiming with Thoreau: "What loving astronomer has ever fathomed the ethereal depths of the human eye?" And when I found from out these depths there looked a spirit still more beautiful I was inspired with fresh loathing for untruth, pretension, hypocrisy and every evil thing that has a tendency to make the character less noble than God intended.

While the repairs were progressing the club rooms were closed to every one but Agnes. She came to see me or I went to see her every day. Toward the close of the week of absence allowed her I wanted to give her

a surprise and I drove down to her lodgings and invited her and her father to take a ride with me in the park. It was a glorious day in the fall and under the genial influences of sun and sympathetic company they told me more of their previous history than ever before. They had, like myself, known better days, at one time having owned a country seat on the Hudson. Agnes's mother had died when the child was too young to remember her, and the father had supplied the place of both parents. The bond between the two was unusually strong.

"Oh, father, dear," sighed the daughter as we drew up in front of their humble quarters at the end of the afternoon, "if you could spend more afternoons like this, you would soon be well. And if you only had a daughter who could earn a little more, you might. I must try to get something to do evenings so as to have a little extra."

"I am perfectly satisfied with my daughter and think she is doing enough without undertaking anything more," returned the father, looking proudly and fondly at his lovely child.

"I should think, Agnes," I interposed, "that it would be so much more convenient for your father to be on the lower floor in order to get out easier that you would change your rooms. With your salary I should think you might manage."

"So I might, dear Mrs. Winn, if I only had to pay our board and buy our clothing; but alas, our affairs are in such a condition I am obliged to pay lawyers' fees besides."

"What a pity," I replied, "when you need the money so much. There is something so hopeless about ever finishing with litigation."

"Oh, but we shall be through in the course of a year."

"Better add, you hope," interposed Mr. Dearborn.

"Then father will have his rights and we can live more comfortably."

The following day, about noon, Agnes was to begin her duties. I thought with a sigh how much less I could see her—only in the evening, and then when a crowd was around. Musty old account books would be absorbing the life and vitality from those lovely eyes.

In the midst of my reflections the door opened and the subject of my thoughts stood before me, but how changed! Her eyes were red with weeping, her cheeks were ghastly pale and the fine skin was drawn tense over the cheekbone, indicating great mental anguish.

"My child," I said, rising and going to her, "what *has* happened?"

"Oh, Mrs. Winn," she moaned, "I've lost it! What shall I do? What shall I do?"

I heard a step on the stair which made me draw the poor darling into my room and partly close the door before I asked for an explanation.

As soon as she could command her voice for weeping she said:

"I have lost my position! When I went down to begin just now one of the partners in the firm met me and said my place had been filled permanently."

"But, Agnes, was he the one who had given you permission to be absent?"

"No, and when I asked to see that one, I was told he was in the West on business and would not return for several months."

"Well, I suppose in such a large city there is more than one such place to be had."

"Yes, but it takes so long to find them, and for every vacancy there are so many applicants. What will poor

father do when I tell him? I cannot bear to think of it!"

There was something so heartrending in her grief that I, who only give way to tears at rare intervals, was completely overcome. I drew her head down onto my shoulder and pressed her to me in token of my unspoken sympathy, while I turned my head away and wiped my eyes that she might not know how deeply I was affected and the sight discourage her. Thus for some time the silence was only broken by Agnes's sobs. As these grew less frequent my naturally active disposition began to assert itself. At last I said:

"Dear Agnes, surely there is something to be done. We can bring some influence to bear on that hard-hearted man. Let me think. His business is wholesale fancy goods. Mettle, Shaw & Co. must trade with him in their large retail every-kind-of-goods establishment, or Denny & Fish, on Fourteenth street, would be good customers with their large millinery trade. That's just it! We will ask either of those young ladies to go with us to talk to the man. Nothing they could write would have the effect of a personal interview. So cheer up, darling! I will go out into the back room for a little piece of ice and after you have had a cool drink and washed your eyes we will start right off."

I did not see any one as I started to walk through the long room (or rooms they might be called) belonging to the club, but I heard some one hastily clear his throat and say, "Mrs. Winn," in a voice scarcely above a whisper. I looked round and to my surprise saw Kipp Grasse. He was nearly as agitated as when he was trying to add up the lengthy sums in addition while Miss Denny's collaborator in the treasury department. He had evidently run his hand through his hair forward and back

in a way seriously to confuse its tendency to lie in any particular direction and consequently it stood upright.

"I say now, Mrs. Winn," he began, somewhat embarrassed, now that he found himself before me. "Can't a fellow help, you know?"

I must have looked at him as an impudent intruder, which truth compels me to say was my first thought, when he added in explanation:

"Miss Denny promised to meet me here and go for a drive, you know; and I could not help hearing what you said in there. I never felt so broke up in my life before. It is really a terrible thing to lose a position at this time in the year, Mrs. Winn. But you hit it when you proposed going for Miss Mettle or Miss Denny. A very clever idea, Mrs. Winn. My dogcart is just outside, and I will ride up for Miss Mettle, while Miss Denny will be along any time."

I begrudged giving Mr. Grassey the privilege of serving Agnes in any way, but I thought the young lady might find it pleasanter to come in his turnout, and one or the other certainly would be on hand sooner. The possibility of their objecting to render what aid they could never entered into my calculations. I sat down to write a note to Miss Mettle, as Mr. Grassey preferred the principal facts in the case to be on paper, so that his treacherous memory need not be taxed.

"For if I should forget anything hanging would be too good for me!" he exclaimed hotly.

While I was thus engaged I noticed Mr. Grassey appeared restless, but not till afterward did I find out through what a crisis he was passing. Do not smile, gentle reader, for it was a serious matter. This young dude, whose warmest affection had hitherto been expended on his waistcoats and cravats, was having the truth brought

suddenly and overwhelmingly home to his soul of the existence of something higher and nobler to love. It could not be called love at first sight, for Mr. Grassey had seen Agnes several times before. But it would have been impossible to mistake the symptoms for that of any other malady. There was the feverish longing to gaze upon the beloved object and the attempt to simulate an indifferent regard of space when detected in such rapt glances. There were the blushes succeeded by the pallor which indicated an unsteadiness in the movements of the heart not to be overcome by the ordinary medicaments used in diseases of that organ.

As soon as the note was finished Mr. Grassey seized it and left the room. But he returned almost immediately and said:

"Oh, Mrs. Winn, I forgot to ask you where you would be when I returned?"

"Where I would be?" I repeated in astonishment, noticing that Mr. Grassey was edging around till he could get a good view of Agnes. When he accomplished this and was conscious I was glaring in disapproval upon him, he sent his gaze off into space to feign the unconsciousness he certainly did not feel.

After being assured that we should not leave that place until his return, which I intimated in emphatic terms could not be too soon, he again left, only to return the second time, and when he saw Agnes had changed her place and was in front of the door, he stammered:

"Mrs.—er—er—Mrs. Winn, may I—er—er—see you—er—er—at the door?"

It never takes me very long to get to any particular spot, and being out of patience with the young man, I was perhaps unusually rapid in my movements. It may have been due to my unexpected precipitancy that he replied to my inquiring:

"Well?"

"I wished to say——," slapping his knee impatiently; "oh, I wanted to tell you that——" (I really pitied his poor head on account of the thumps it received from the stiff rim of his beaver.) "Now, you know, Mrs. Winn, it has gone from me, just what I *did* mean to say. Can you think?"

"I guess you meant to say you would not be away five minutes, eh, Mr. Grassey?" pulling out my watch. "It is just two o'clock now. We will see how long you are gone."

"All right. I am sure you've hit it as you always do! I will see if I cannot be back in less time than you expect."

In my note to Miss Mettle I stated the facts regarding Agnes's loss of position as truthfully and strongly as I could. I blotted the page with my tears as I pictured the great calamity it would be to her and her helpless father to be without work. I was very careful to put my request for her presence with us, while calling at the office of the firm in the form of a question, asking if she could think of any better way. Still, as I sat thinking the matter over after Mr. Grassey's departure I was dissatisfied. I wished I had gone with him. "It is so much better to attend to such things in person!" I kept saying as I uneasily walked from one window to another that I might catch a glimpse of the return of the familiar dogcart. "At all events, I shall have a personal interview with Miss Denny, though of the two characters Miss Mettle's is so much the stronger it would be safer to have the latter."

I kept Agnes in my room with the door closed, because I felt I could talk more freely if she were not by.

Scarce five minutes had sped away when my impatience

was relieved by having Miss Denny appear. My heart misgave me as I discovered the mood this usually flip-pant, airy creature was in. Good reader, have you ever seen young ladies who sometimes have their costumes of such a character that they remind you of the springiness of a ballet dancer's skirts? If so, you can understand the general effect of Miss Denny's appearance at this time. The change from the close-clinging robes of the æsthete in which I last saw her swathed was very great. Now her every movement was followed by an answering quiver from some part of her gay-colored attire. But there was a dark cloud on her brow and I learned she had just come from an interview with her dressmaker.

"I only wish I had boxed her impudent little ears!" she ejaculated half under her breath. "Think of her insisting she could not help keeping me waiting a *whole day* for this! And then refusing to see any defects in it, with that wrinkle under the arm. Here, Mrs. Winn, see if you can tell why this dress wrinkles?"

I looked and replied:

"I can think of no better reason than that your flesh wrinkles. You could hardly expect your dressmaker to improve on your Creator. I should call that a very fine fit if it were not so tight."

"Tight! Why, it's altogether too loose. My maid was able to get it together without using the contractor, the best invention of the age for bringing dresses new and unshaped together."

I felt so helpless as I looked upon this vain, giddy creature twisting and turning before the mirror. How could I interest her, or even change the conversation into the channel I was longing to have it run?

After a few minutes of unbroken silence, in which all the attitudes and poses that the mind of a melo-dramatic

star of the first magnitude could suggest had been struck, a question which she asked opened the way for me.

"Where is Mr. Grassey?"

"He has gone for Miss Mettle."

"How is that, when he asked me to ride with him?"

"A very sad case has come to our notice——"

"Why did you not send it to the charity organization, Mrs. Winn? We don't mean to hold ourselves in readiness to attend to all the sad cases."

"But, Miss Denny," I urged, my desperation assisting me to maintain a placid exterior, "there is only once in a while a case like this, where the personal influence of friends will perhaps be able to ward off a calamity which nothing else will prevent. Let me tell you about it."

"No, you need not. I do not care to hear. You have been very officious in sending Mr. Grassey off when he ought to have been here to keep his engagement with me."

"Well, you have not had to wait for him very long," I replied, as Mr. Grassey entered. He wore a very solemn look as he handed me a note.

"What! could you not bring Miss Mettle, either!" I stammered.

"You must think we are a couple of simpletons. And let me tell you, Kipp Grassey, I do not like to be kept waiting in this style."

"Ah, you don't; I object to it generally, but I have not minded to-day. The next time we will both try and do better, eh?"

"But it is not too late to go now. It is only half-past three."

"Yes—er—er—but my man says one of my horses is not very well and—er—er—so I thought we would not go."

"Oh, you are so tender of your horses! Well, I will ride up with you as far as your stable and go to see my sister who lives a couple blocks above."

"I should be very happy, but one of my horses must have a new shoe, and I shall not go right up to the stable, so I'll say 'good afternoon.'"

If I should pretend that I grieved at Miss Denny's disappointment I should say what was very far from the truth. Therefore all remarks on the subject will be omitted.

"Oh, Kipp Grassey is such a detestable creature!" Miss Denny snapped out to the looking-glass as she turned on his departure to view the one wrinkle and to resume the abuse of her dressmaker for its presence.

I took the note from Miss Mettle to read the second time, in order to give my wits a chance to recover from the shock of disappointment conveyed by its contents. I give it below, not for its display of literary ability, but to show how peculiarly fitted Miss Mettle was to hold the position of president of a society whose object was benevolence and the elevation of the masses.

"DEAR MRS. WINN:

"You cannot expect me to try and get positions for all the working girls in Christendom, nor to try and keep those in who through stupidity or neglect lose what they already possess. You ask me if I do not think it best to go to the member of the firm and try to get this girl taken back. By no means. We would gain the reputation of meddlers in other people's affairs. This girl must learn not to absent herself from her place of business if she wishes to keep her position. I enclose some soup tickets and some tracts on 'How to Succeed in Life.' Use them as you think best. Do not write me very often. I have

almost lost my hairdresser by being obliged through Kipp Grassey's importunities to answer this. Hastily,

"R. A. M."

"This girl must learn not to absent herself from her place of business if she wishes to keep her position," kept ringing in my ears, and the fine appreciation of services rendered in the sentiment filled me with unspeakable amazement and indignation! Was it wicked for me to wish just for one second that "this girl" had learned enough of selfish care for her own well being to have allowed the illustrious philanthropist's heels to be singed by the fire that had been the cause of her own disastrous absence? But it was only for a second, and then I was ready to offer a song of praise that Agnes was no other than the dear, unselfish girl she had proved herself.

Jacob on his lonely stone pillow at Bethel could not have felt any more perplexed or disheartened than I did at this juncture of affairs; but not to him alone was vouchsafed a realizing sense of the wonderful truth that the distance between earth and heaven is spanned by a ladder whereon ministering spirits ascend and descend in performing God's will. I shall always feel that over that ladder was sent to me an angel to whisper in my ear the name of Mrs. Conrad. It is certain that from no earthly source could the impulse to go to this lady have come to me, for our acquaintance was so slight that after my mind was fully made up to go to her I trembled with apprehension at what she might think of my presumption. But the same influence which prompted me to seek her evidently prepared her to listen and undertake my cause.

She was dressing for a wedding reception, the servant told us, and there was but slight prospect she could see

us. But on going to her mistress the girl returned with word that if I could wait fifteen minutes Mrs. Conrad would come down.

"Yes, she will come down," I thought, "but, under the circumstances she will only be able to give us a few words of excellent advice and not lend us the aid of her personal presence, which would be so much more effective." I had reason to repent such murmurings, however, a few minutes later.

"I am so glad, Mrs. Winn, that you have come to me in your trouble," Mrs. Conrad rejoined, after greeting both Agnes and myself most cordially and listening with earnest solicitude to my story. "My husband has had legal transactions with that firm, and I think they will be willing to listen to me."

"But, dear Mrs. Conrad, you do not think we are so selfish as to wish you to give up your engagement for us."

"There is no need of my giving up my engagement. If I go with you first, it will only make me a little later, which is a matter of no consequence whatever. But even if I had to stay away entirely, I should be so much happier to think of having done all in my power for this dear girl. Don't cry, my child," she continued, laying her hand caressingly on Agnes's shoulder. "My carriage is at the door and will take us to the store as soon as I have a longer outer garment brought to me to cover up my inappropriate finery."

The long outer garment made quite a transformation in Mrs. Conrad's appearance. She was a person whose French extraction was noticeable in her dark hair and bright, black eyes, and she had in a marked degree the French faculty of dressing with taste, but she also seemed to aim at changing her personality by a change of raiment, and the long, slightly rusty pelisse that soon cov-

ered the rich brocade and gems made the handsome woman and leader of the best New York social circles look like a thrifty book agent or an energetic boarding-house matron on the war path for the best the market affords at the lowest figure. I think Mrs. Conrad assumed this costume on purpose to first try her ability to move the stubborn man of business by the mere force of her personal will unaided by exterior surroundings.

We were not long driving from the home of our kind friend to the store Agnes had but lately left. The coachman received instructions to put his horses to their best speed, but go as fast as he might he could not outstrip a certain dogcart which first passed us, its owner peering anxiously into the carriage, and in so doing narrowly escaping collision with a Fifth avenue stage; then, falling behind a short distance, it overtook us on the opposite side of the way. I did not want Agnes to recognize it, and I saw by watching her that there was no danger. Poor girl! she was not seeing anything but a future into which not a ray of light seemed to penetrate. Not even Mrs. Conrad's exclamation, "I should think that man in the dogcart wanted us to run over him, he dashes around so promiscuously!" aroused her. She did not turn her head to see who the man in the dogcart was. I thought that for horses not well nor properly shod, Mr. Grassey was making his keep unusually fast time, and when I got a chance I frowned darkly at him, but he returned the stern look with a low bow, and lifting his hat from his head he raised his eyebrows as much as to ask where we were going. I was glad neither of my companions saw the pantomime, and I carefully avoided looking in his direction again.

On reaching our destination, Mrs. Conrad inquired for Mr. Damon, the member of the firm whom Agnes

had just seen. With her long wrap buttoned up close to her chin, she approached the gentleman in question and begun the colloquy thus:

"This is Mr. Damon, I suppose?"

The gentleman turned and seeing some one whom he probably expected to hand him a volume to inspect (not having caught sight of Agnes), answered:

"Yes, but I am very busy. Please state your errand as briefly as possible."

"I called, Mr. Damon," Mrs. Conrad returned, "to plead the cause of Miss Agnes Dearborn, who has been your bookkeeper for some time, I believe, and whose unfortunate absence has resulted in her permanent dismissal. I hope you will reconsider your decision in regard to her case, for her loss of position will bring the greatest sorrow into her home. She has an aged, invalid father, who depends entirely on her for support."

Mr. Damon, a tall, gaunt man, rose from his chair as Mrs. Conrad finished her remarks, looked us all over and, finding himself wrong on the book agent supposition, was evidently inclined to the boarding-house keeper theory. He did not ask us to be seated, but insolently rejoined:

"If you feel so deeply for Miss Dearborn, why do you not take her into business with yourself?"

"For whom do you mistake me, sir?" exclaimed Mrs. Conrad, opening her wrap and appearing in the full flush of her wedding reception toilet. "There is my card, and I think you will admit, after you see the name, that such unhandsome treatment and insinuations are somewhat misplaced."

"I most humbly beg your pardon, Mrs. Conrad," rejoined Mr. Damon, his chagrin turning his face fairly green, "but why did you not let me know who you were?"

Do be seated," and he obsequiously vacated his arm-chair for Mrs. Conrad and fairly ran to get seats for us.

"Don't trouble yourself, Mr. Damon," replied the lady. "We do not wish to be seated. All I want of you is to take this young lady back, as your brother promised to, with an increase of twenty-five dollars a month salary."

"Oh, certainly, Mrs. Conrad, if you will promise not to say anything about this unfortunate interview."

Mrs. Conrad assured him she was as ashamed as he to find out how little he was moved by genuine regard for another's sufferings, and if he would sign a contract, to be witnessed by Mrs. Winn and herself, insuring Miss Dearborn her position and increase of salary, she would bind herself to say nothing about what had happened.

As we reached the street a large bunch of beautiful jacqueminot roses were thrust into my hands and, glancing around, Mr. Grassey asked me in an undertone;

"May I give them to her?"

"Yes, for her father," I replied.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREE F. P.'S DEFINE THEIR PECULIAR METHODS.

MISS METTLE, as president of the Working Girls' Club, announced her intention of having sole charge of affairs for the first week.

"I will see that it has a good start, at all events, and then if you girls do not keep up to the high standard that I mean to establish it will not be my fault."

"High standard, indeed!" sneered Miss Hopper. "The chances are you will have things in such a muddle that no one will be able to do anything after you. If you do not get the girls all ablaze and then turn the fire department on them they may be very thankful."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Miss Denny, winking one of her sharp black eyes, "if she has the same effect on the working girls that she seems to on you, Annie Hopper, those that come after her will feel as though they had to work in a hive of enraged bees."

"I will thank you, Grace Denny, to mind your own affairs! You can't be expected to understand the feelings of a girl of spirit! Such a giddy butterfly as you are is only fit to tread on one toe and fan herself with a cobweb."

"I hope you don't think I pay any attention to what such a snapping turtle says. I had a thousand times rather spend my days twirling on one toe, when I can do it so well" (and here she arose and executed her favorite *pas*) "than be noted for being such a verbal cannibal!"

"Stop calling each other names and let us talk over some plans and methods of procedure. For, after the first week, you will both have to take your turns at having charge."

"Well, when my brow is encircled with the diadem of authority," said Miss Hopper, "I shall see that the girls are taught poetry and art and perhaps a little higher mathematics and the sciences; but poetry and art are the best means of elevating the masses. There's 'Lalla Rookh' now! How could anybody read that beautiful tale without being elevated; without being lifted far above the low and debasing effects of menial employment; without realizing that we might all be living in a state of perfect love and beatific enjoyment—if people were not so contrary, so determined to be poor and miserable and make other people take care of them."

"Oh, fiddle-dee-dee!" exclaimed Miss Mettle. "Everybody in love raves over 'Lalla Rookh'; but, as for myself, I'd rather do a sum in arithmetic any day than read a verse of it, and as for giving such moonshine to the girls to read, you might just as well try to feed buffaloes on ice cream. Now, I feel as if the unmannerliness, impertinence, ignorance and viciousness that we shall have to encounter has to be met with firm, unflinching, perhaps heroic, treatment. We shall have to act the part of tamers and trainers."

"What absolute nonsense!" exclaimed Miss Denny. "Neither of you understand what is needed! These poor girls are just suffering for amusement, and when I have the chair they are going to dance and play cards and have a grand, good time! I guess we'd find it hard work to get along if we could go to but one entertainment in an evening, and perhaps only one in the week! Then they will dress better, if I have to get my minister to take up a

collection on the Sabbath; for it's impossible to take much interest in life with an old dud of a gown on."

I sat in my room with the door open while the above conversation was in progress. The tones of these three fair philanthropists, which never lacked in carrying quality, always grew especially pronounced when they were alone or when nobody but myself was around, so it was unnecessary for me to look up to decide as to the personality of the speaker. Miss Mettle's tones were crisp and sharp, and her words were uttered with all the force and unction of an oracle, in which character she was pleased to have others regard her. Sometimes the piercing quality of her hard, cold, steel-grey eye, followed up by the incisive tones of her voice, reminded me of those ancient instruments of warfare, the battering ram and the catapult.

But we must not linger so long over superficial descriptions of these profound wrestlers with the intricate and illusive problems of philanthropy when their actual deeds are ready for our consideration. For at length the wagon we have awaited with so much patience is ready—the wheels are properly lubricated, the seats dusted, the whip brought out from its hiding place in the corner nearest the last refractory animal, the last anxious question asked as to the soundness of the leather composing the harness, the reins are placed in our hands, and, having obeyed the injunction of the song, "to wait for the wagon," we will proceed to jump in "and all take a ride," which noble metaphor as applied to our case means that the club rooms were completed, Moorish arch, tapestry paper and all. New and richer velour hangings were at the windows and gaudy gilt storks were stepping with great decision over thick Japanese portières.

Word was brought to Miss Mettle that Miss Cristie's club had been presented with a handsome water cooler. She

therefore determined her own society must have a gift of some kind. Consequently, in an alcove appeared a life-size group in bronze of "Abraham Lincoln Emancipating the Slave." The card of some unknown lady was attached to this present, but the bill, I had reason to know, was settled from the funds of the club.

Miss Mettle, pointing to this group with her usual modest reticence, was accustomed to say:

"Abraham Lincoln undoubtedly performed a great act in liberating the slaves, but it was not anything more than *I* should have done had I been president, and I know well enough that I could have added certain notable restrictions and conditions that would have made easier work for *us philanthropists* of to-day."

But to return to the description of the rooms. Several oil paintings adorned the walls that caused Miss Mettle no little annoyance, as they were given in lieu of the subscriptions their owners had written down with great flourishes on the pages dedicated to the names of the great and good who never do anything with their right hand save when a trumpet is in their left. On the highly polished floors lay all kinds of costly rugs, which slipped around with the greatest facility, landing the startled newcomer on every extremity except the right ones.

"How is it you let them all come in before my arrival, Winn?" asked Miss Mettle the first evening.

"Mrs. Winn, if you have no objections," I replied, feeling that if I was to command the respect of the girls I must be addressed with respect by those who considered themselves (far be it from me to say that *I* considered them) my superiors.

"Well, your most profound Majesty, Mrs. Winn, will you be so kind as to clear the room of these girls? I propose at the very start to teach them manners. Here, give

me that book," snatching a paper-covered pamphlet in which I had been writing the names and addresses of the newcomers.

"You commence by giving them lessons in snatching, I presume," I rejoined, somewhat tartly.

"Don't talk like that. You impose on me because I am young and good-natured and overlook your deficiencies, but there is a limit to all things, even to my patience. It is my duty to look sharply after everything in connection with this undertaking. All the contents of every book must be known to me. I did not mean to snatch that book. I do not think I did. No, I am quite sure I did not. Then, why should you talk so disagreeably about my giving lessons in snatching?"

I refrained from replying, knowing that Miss Mettle had worked herself up to a point where it would be folly to argue the matter with her. I proceeded, therefore, to marshal the girls out of the room. There were fifty of them, of various nationalities and degrees of attractiveness. To me there was a real pleasure in looking in their faces and reading the story of their lives, which in many cases was written in hard, deep lines. How happy I felt I should be if I could do them any good or relieve their cares.

Miss Mettle, on the other hand, gazed at them out of her hard, steel-grey eyes very much as a professional lion tamer might have done. She never spoke to them save in tones of command, and when one offered a "good evening" she gazed at her with the look of a Medusa, as though the only reason she did not turn the culprit to stone was the sternly insurmountable one—that she could not. She established herself at the farther end of the room on a raised dais and gave her orders to me.

"Mrs. Winn, I mean to teach these young women manners; to begin with, I shall show them how they are to

enter a room and how a lady may enter it; and they must remember it is an unpardonable offense for them to think *they* can do as ladies do in any respect."

When I repeated to the girls these commands they were greatly modified so that no offense seemed to be given, but they entered into the spirit of learning manners very much in the same way in which they might start to hunt the slipper or play blind man's buff. Two or three had passed through the prescribed form without remark, when it came the turn of an awkward German girl, who said:

"Oh, my! I never see no such tings nowhere. By my cousin's, where I live, they would tink I put all dose airs on if they see me fiddling round a door widout anything special to do!"

"Mrs. Winn, please do not interrupt by conversing with the girls!" came in severe tones from the raised dais.

It was very funny to see the German. It seemed as though her knees had absolutely no bend to them. She opened the door and her curtsy to the right was the queerest little compound of a bob and a nod, while her attempt at repeating the action to the left was frustrated by her stepping on one of the slippery rugs and going over like a ninepin in an alley. She was up in an instant very much frightened, the hairpins starting from her head in every direction, while her pale blue eyes under her white eyelashes expressed dismay.

"Oh, my! I am so distonished!" she exclaimed. "I t'o't I were doing it de right way up, but no! it were de udder way quicker dan de blitzen!"

"That is the most outrageous behavior I ever witnessed!" came in still severer accents from the platform. "Mrs. Winn, tell that—that—I hardly know what to call her—to leave the room and not to return until she can learn to pass through that door as she should."

"Agnes," I whispered, "take that poor girl into my room and bathe her head."

The curtsies were made in every variety of manner: with dignity, with frivolous haste, with conscious frigidity, with perfect grace, with nipping precision, with slouchy carelessness, but at length they were all made.

"Now, Mrs. Winn, I will show these girls how a *lady* should enter a room, but they need not imitate, only when I have entered let them greet me all together with the curtsies I have just shown them how to execute, and I will see how well they remember what they have been taught."

I had attended an exhibition of twenty-four trained horses not a long time previously, and I was reminded of what the duty of their owner must have been as I arranged the girls around in a semi-circle facing the door Miss Mettle was to enter. That aperture opened with a majestic wave of the hand. The stately form of the president of the club never appeared so entirely the embodiment of lofty pride and haughty self-complacency. Her chin was elevated to an angle of sixty degrees and her steel-grey eyes were fixed on some object near the ceiling. Altogether, there was the air of "See the conquering hero comes!" and we were just preparing, metaphorically speaking, "to sound the trumpet, beat the drum," when the statuesque outlines of her noble figure were suddenly and rudely broken by her arms going up in the air, her hands frantically clutching at space (which is a very unsatisfactory means of support, as all who have ever tried it will be ready to testify), and with the same celerity of movement as the German, due to the same cause, she lay prostrate before us. The cost of laying the hardwood floors and polishing them had been a large item, and if I had thought she would have been interested in the subject just then I should have enjoyed asking her if she did not think the

money spent on that floor was bringing in a fine harvest.

There was a general oh—h! of surprise and consternation from the semi-circle of girls, while the German said:

“Oh, just tinks! Mein fräulein so pleased mit my executions dat she copy me, eh? So——”

“Hear ze konzeted geese!” exclaimed a black-eyed French girl in a whisper. “Les Allemands,” with a shrug of infinite disdain, “nevair see person in ze Unnevair but zemselves! Mademoiselle copy you en verite! Ze copy not one person, mais ze sleep on de floor. Ze mayhap copy a bear, une vache un bête mais un miserable Allemand ‘nevair!’”

As Miss Mettle did not stir, I bent over and asked her if she was much hurt. Receiving no answer, we were all alarmed, and at my suggestion the girls gathered round and assisted in moving her. I thought to myself as she lay there: “She is the maddest looking insensible person I ever had the pleasure or pain of beholding!” and I consequently was not surprised, when we were half way to the sofa, to have her suddenly open her eyes and say in her sternest tones:

“You are moving me without sending for a physician, and these girls are taking hold of my beautiful silk dress with their dirty hands! Never mind—don’t drop me!”

But the caution came too late. Some of the girls were so startled to hear her speak and others were so overpowered by her allusions to the state of their hands that there was a general letting go, and if I had not had the presence of mind to hold on to her head she would have had a worse fall than at first. As it was, she landed on her feet principally, which, with the upward tendency I gave her head, enabled her, with some unseemly scuffling, to stand upright. She left soon after, and, it not being quite nine

o'clock, I invited the girls to be seated and gave them a few of my thoughts on how we might improve odd moments. I said to myself: "I cannot bear to think of these girls coming here and only learning how to mince and bow, dip and curtsy in and out of a room, when a straightforward, natural manner which they alone could teach themselves by not expending so much thought on themselves would accomplish their object so much better." Consequently, I proposed that they bring something to sew, either for themselves or their families.

"I used to know how to sew," I told them, "and although the life of a teacher is not conducive to perfecting one in that branch of industry, perhaps I can help you. If I cannot, perhaps some other of your companions can."

This suggestion was received with approbation. The next evening we all saw the good of it, for Miss Mettle was an hour and a half late, and the girls had time to take a great many stitches before her appearance.

"What are you all doing?" she demanded as she opened the door. "Sewing! why, I did not leave anything for you to sew! and see how you are scattering threads and scraps over that beautiful lounge and these elegant rugs. Perhaps you think I spent the thousands of dollars I did on these apartments to make them suitable sewing rooms!"

"Miss Mettle, I will remove every trace of disturbance from these rooms in a way that will not injure anything," I replied. "See what nice sewing some of these girls can do."

Miss Mettle put on her eyeglasses, and, after inspecting the work, said graciously:

"Why, yes, that is done very well. I think I shall have to get the girls to sew for me. I like to have my underclothes made by hand."

"I am sure that some of those present would be pleased to earn a little in that way," I replied.

"Oh, I did not mean to pay anything for it! They do not pay me for my time or the use of these magnificent rooms, and they must be willing to render what trifling aid they can in return for all that is done for them."

Miss Mettle proceeded with her taming and training to the end of the week. The effects on the girls were various. The German continued to be "distonished" with herself at her inability to preserve her equilibrium on the slippery floors, but she was content to replace her many hairpins in her straw-colored hair and try again. The French girl's inmost soul was thrilled by the gorgeousness of her surroundings. She was ready if need were to crawl, nay, even to bury her small, round head, with its snapping black eyes and deep dimples, in the dust, if by so doing she could gain the slightest signs of approval from the ruling powers of the place.

At one time Miss Mettle condescendingly put her hand on the girl's hair and said:

"Adele Veaux, too much crimp here. You know, persons in your station are not to wear their hair in any other way than perfectly plain. I mean to revolutionize the existing unwarrantable license in this respect."

"Oh, ze mademoiselle is so good. Ze has all de interré (interest) in de world in de pauvre fille. Oh, oui, plain! Ne personne know how much I wishes my hairs plains! I brushes and brushes and brushes! Mais n'importe; I go pull out each one viz de pinchers if mademoiselle likes?"

"And then have not a hair on your head, you crazy Jane?" cried the metallic voice of the philanthropist, upon whose steely soul all sentiments or expressions of devotion were thrown away. "If I catch you doing anything of that kind I'll have you put in a reformatory."

"Oh, ma foi! Pardonnez pauvre Adele. Ze is *si bête!* Mais ze will do nozzin' to be sent to ze deformatory."

But there were those whose submission was not so marked. Miss Mettle seemed to take a special dislike to Agnes on the principle that we always dislike those to whom we have done an ill turn; in other words, "He who has injured you will never forgive you;" or perhaps I might say the antagonism of a hard, small nature is always roused by being brought in contact with generosity and unselfishness.

Meanwhile my own mind was kept uneasy by the restless motions of Kipp Grassey. He came into the rooms daily. If I was busy he waited until I finished whatever I was doing, and then the arts and devices he used to get me to talk about Agnes were very amusing. He never mentioned her name without asking such questions as these: "Are you pleased with the number present, Mrs. Winn?" "Do they *all* come regularly?" "Are they *all* generally well?" "For instance, were they *all* well last evening?" "Do they *all* like what is taught them?" etc., etc.

I answered his questions with as sober a face as I could command, though many a time I was sorely tempted to smile at his lame attempts to cover up his interest in the individual by his inquiries for the collective.

By the end of the week Miss Mettle was so elated with the advance her scholars had made in the manners she had taught them and she was so overcome with her labors in their behalf that she determined to reward herself by inviting a number of her friends around (to speak plainly) to have an exhibition, though she was pleased to dignify the gathering as an attempt to rouse the interest of the Benevolent. Miss Denny tried to visit her wrath on Kipp Grassey for not taking her out to ride as many times as

she thought he ought to, by omitting him from the invitations, but to Miss Mettle's clear and analytical mind that was reason sufficient for urging him to be present.

The girls were not given particular instructions as to how they were expected to comport themselves. Miss Mettle satisfied herself in telling me a few hours before the guests were expected and allowing me the sweet privilege of making myself odious by executing her orders.

The guests were to be seated at tables, where they would play whist for a certain length of time. Then, at a given signal, the girls, who must be previously kept out of sight, were to appear and entertain the company.

When Miss Mettle told me her plans I groaned aloud and said:

"Is there not some man with a few tame bears whom you could get to take the place of these girls? It would be more amusing, because you could be sure that you were not hurting anybody's feelings."

"Feelings!" replied Miss Mettle, "you don't know much about the lower classes if you imagine they have any feelings. Moreover, how are they ever going to repay me for all the money and time and worry and care and trouble I am spending on them if they cannot do something for me once in a while? All the girls must be formed in line so as to make as great a display as possible; but you must find some way of keeping the German out. Send her around after a glass of lager beer if she is not to be prevented by any other means. We cannot have her rolling around before people."

When Mr. Kipp Grassey arrived that evening and heard a rumor of what the order of exercises was to be, he made the excuse of offering me a glass of water while he asked in a distressed whisper:

"They are not *all* expected to be on exhibition, or else

servants, are they? You can make exceptions in favor of some, can you not?"

"I will certainly try," I replied.

With that end in view, when Agnes came I was whispering to her some excuse for sending her right home, when Miss Mettle appeared at the door and said peremptorily:

"Send that girl in to keep tally for us."

"I'll send Mademoiselle Veaux in," I replied; "this girl is not strong enough."

"I am only a little tired, dear Mrs. Winn," returned Agnes.

"Nonsense! don't be such a coddler!" exclaimed Miss Mettle. "You want to make them all think they are sick. Next thing you will want to be taking up a collection to send them all to Europe."

"Well, I should not be able to get them far, judging from the success I have in getting enough to supply their bare necessities!" I replied, feeling thoroughly vexed at my inability to keep Agnes out of that room. My frame of mind was not improved by catching a glimpse of the position which Agnes was made to occupy. She was standing on a raised dais, with pencil and paper in her hand. Various things were being called out to her by young bucks, who were striving to be particularly witty, and that being whom I loathed above all others—Mr. Grout—was making excuse to overlook her accounts to get near her and whisper soft things in her ear. While she, poor dear, was looking at him in her innocence; and Kipp Grassey was glaring first at them and then at me as if he would say:

"See what you've done!"

How I ever managed to control myself sufficiently not to go in and lead Agnes out I shall never be able fully to

explain. Perhaps it was because I immediately set myself to contrive a course of conduct which would cure Miss Mettle of ever wanting to make a similar display again. I neglected to mention to the German that she need not join us, and I suggested to the others that they might perform their share of the exercises in the way I knew Miss Mettle most particularly disliked. The result exceeded my fondest expectations. Our evolutions were greeted with shouts of derision, and when the German made her appearance and then her speedy disappearance, Miss Mettle's smothered rage broke out in the forcible invective with which she was wont at times to embellish her choice conversation. I saw the dark-browed girls were very much exercised by this form of address, and when we went out to bring in the very elaborate refreshments which had been ordered and found absolutely nothing to bring in, with the hour so late that it would be impossible to get anything in their place, I readily discovered their method of revenge and I was content.

CHAPTER IX.

PHILANTHROPY IN OTHER FIELDS.

THE good, kind, patient reader who has followed Mrs. Winn's experiences through the previous chapters is now invited to a change of scene. It would be leaving a wrong impression if it was understood that the impulse to deeds of philanthropy and benevolence were confined to one class in society. And that class the one to which our three fair philanthropists belong. Ah, no, it is a humanity-loving age in which we live; at least, it is an age when vast pretensions are made to humanity-loving. It becomes the author's painful duty to show how these pretensions are carried on in a sphere where alas! everything ought to be established on a firm basis of truth and sincerity; that is, in the church.

Not far from the club rooms, in an easterly direction, where in years gone by fashion reigned as autocratically as she does now around Central Park, stands an edifice in the Gothic style of architecture. It occupies a triangular plot of ground, and, from the symbols of the cross with which it is adorned, indicates to the passer-by the presence of a Protestant Episcopal house of worship. Let us enter the side door with several gentlemen.

"Hello, Denny!" cried a corpulent gentleman with a deep voice and a scowl on his forehead, whose name is Mr. Elijah Bowman. "*You* here? Why, I thought you had left the church."

"Ha! ha! ha!" replied the gentleman addressed, a

short, wiry individual, with black eyes and hair, bearing a strong resemblance to the member of his family with whom the reader has already become acquainted in the person of Miss Grace Denny, his daughter. "Well, I have not been regular, that's a fact. Te! he! he!" he continued, as though he considered such absence a wonderfully good joke.

"Yes," growled the first speaker, "it's a great deal easier to laugh when you stay away than when you come back and find things in a general muddle!"

"Well, I have not been absent more than a year, have I? Let me think—yes, I guess I have not been here since we returned from Florida, a year ago last March. Strange to say, Bowman, I find a little religion goes a great ways with me now," and Mr. Denny went off into another fit of laughter, while his friend sat looking at him, his scowl deeper and his visage altogether more somber than ever.

"Here, Bowman!" called a choleric-looking gentleman of over fifty, who sat on the opposite side of the table, "what does this mean?" holding up a pamphlet on the outside of which was a picture of the church in which they sat, with the words "Manual of the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven."

"Well," growled Bowman, "I suppose your eyesight is good, Griffin. If you read that thing you'll soon find out what it all means. It sounds extremely well to have vestrymen whose business it is to know what is going on in their church inquiring what things mean, just like outsiders. Where have you fellows been for the past five or six months?"

"Just keep a civil tongue in your head, Bowman!" answered the gentleman named Griffin, while his snow-white hair fairly seemed to rise in indignation around his very florid countenance.

"My tongue is a mighty sight more civil to you, Griffin, than you deserve," returned Bowman, fiercely, rising and emphasizing his remarks by solemn jerks of his head. "I guess if I told you fellers just what I thought of you there'd be some shivering—— But I don't believe in profanity in a church."

"Do you mean to insinuate you would call me anything but a gentleman?" cried Griffin, rising in his turn and shaking his fist at his adversary across the table.

"I might call you a gentleman, but I'd put an adjective before it that would just make you *hop!*" returned the undaunted Bowman.

"Ho! ho! ho!" burst in Mr. Denny, with his ever-ready and melodious laugh. "*Hop!* Why, Griffin, you ought not to object to being made to hop. I saw a man last evening at the minstrels who makes a fine thing out of his hopping—something like five thousand a year. If Bowman, the growler here, could put you in a way——"

"Brute!" cried Griffin, "confine your maudlin witticisms to men of your own inferior station and tastes in life."

"I thought we had met at this time to look out for the interests of our church," suggested a vestryman by the name of Islip.

"Yes, the interests of our church," sneered Bowman; "how deeply affected we seem to be by the interests of our church! But of course you could not expect men with such important matters on hand as nigger minstrels, horse racing and pool playing to have any spare time for such trivialities as church interests!"

"By jinks, Bowman!" cried Islip, hotly, "you deserve a sound thrashing!"

"That he does!" cried the rest in concert. "Let us give it to him!"

"All right, come on!" cried the doughty Bowman. "I'm not afraid of all of you! No, nor twice your number. You can try thrashing me, and I would admire to polish you off. I'd like to see if after all your worldliness had been rubbed off there would be anything left!"

Bowman succeeded in keeping his adversaries on the opposite side of the table by some timely thrusts, but after a little they got him up in a corner, and his only weapon was a chair, which he swung around without any regard to the antics of the exhilarated Denny, who several times in his great desire to poke his adversary with the rector's long ruler received therefrom an impetus that sent him prone upon the floor. Griffin kept at a respectful distance but used all his lung power to urge the others on by such cheerful exclamations as: "There; give it to him, Denny, right under his fifth rib!" Other members of this dignified body picked up the piles of church manuals and showered them upon the gentleman in the corner, while still others picked up the rector's books and sent them after the manuals. The dust from the carpet ascended like smoke from a battlefield, and the uproar was much more likely to be mistaken as that coming from a scene of carnage than the accustomed sounds of devotion from a place of worship.

In the thickest of the fray, when there remained nothing left to send after the unconquered but the ink bottle and mucilage, the folding doors at the farther end of the room opened simultaneously and a couple of wizen-faced boys, dressed in the queer vestments of small acolytes, bearing swinging censers of smoking incense, appeared, closely followed by a couple of older acolytes, and they in turn by the tall figure, which his long robes rendered still taller, of the rector.

"Peace be unto you!" came in harsh, cold, stereotyped

tones from his thin, bloodless lips, as soon as the combatants made a slight pause in their hostilities. Perhaps there could not be a better example of the force of this beautiful greeting than its effect on the agitated group we have been describing, in spite of its coming to them through such a formal, unmeaning source.

The vestrymen immediately began to draw their chairs up around the long table. The rector, the Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven, signalled to the two acolytes to place a heavily-carved high-backed chair at one end for himself and in an ostentatious, cold manner he knelt, making the sign of the cross on his forehead and breast and in a loud, rasping voice recited a Latin prayer. Notwithstanding the edification the vestrymen must have experienced in having their erudition so delicately insinuated that they were masters of the Latin tongue and could therefore join in a Latin prayer, their throats were not proof against the irritating effects of the smoke from the incense, and by the time the prayer was finished Griffin was purple with coughing, Denny was sneezing rapidly in a high falsetto, Islip was wiping his eyes, Bowman was stuffing his pocket handkerchief into his mouth and eyes, and the rest were expressing their discomfort in various ways.

The rector threw a rather contemptuous gaze around at his coadjutors which seemed to say, "It is easy to see that you are strangers to the influences of the sanctuary." But, finding the coughing and sneezing continued in spite of his contempt, in stilted Latin phrase he addressed the wizen-faced boys, requesting them to remove themselves and their smoking censers from the room. Although the boys had been trained in these Latin phrases, together with others for over a month, they failed to understand, and after he had spoken twice Mr. Elijah Bowman took them each by the shoulder and said in a whisper, advancing

toward the door: "He means for you to clear out, you beggars!"

When he reached his chair, before seating himself Mr. Bowman cleared his throat and said:

"I hope you will pardon me, rector, but I am a plain man and do not understand any tongue but my own. If these exercises are to be conducted in Greek or Hebrew there will be no use in my remaining to them."

At the previous meetings of the vestrymen, owing to the few present (usually only Mr. Bowman and the rector), there had been an absence of all formalities. And hence, although the flock had enjoyed the ministrations of the present shepherd over a year, this was the first formal gathering of any number of those elected to assist in the duties of administering the sacred office.

Islip, Denny and Griffin looked at their companion with pity and compassion when they heard him acknowledge his ignorance. Not that it would have been possible for them to have given any smoother translation to the prayer they had just listened to than he, but they believed in the maxim which says that "he who cannot dissimulate is unfit to reign."

"It was not my intention, Mr. Bowman," replied the rector stiffly, "to conduct other than the devotional exercises in the revered Latin tongue, through which medium the Most Holy Fathers have communicated with us from the earliest ages. We will pass at once to the object for which this assembly was convened."

Drawing from his bosom a roll of manuscript, he proceeded to deliver an elaborately prepared address. All history from the time of Adam was reviewed to prove that mankind without forms and ceremonies and those of the most stately and elaborate kind was a heathen and a savage, and after establishing this point to his entire satis-

faction he went on to show by what a lofty courage and disinterested devotion to the uplifting of poor, fallen humanity he was actuated when he took their church, which had hitherto ranked as an Episcopalian of the lowest order, and therefore hardly worthy of the name of church, and attempted to bring it up into the blessedness and privilege of that glorious body whose pomp and splendor put the very sun to the blush, and whose royal line of priesthood descended in unbroken succession from St. Peter himself. At the mention of this last name the rector prostrated himself for such a length of time that the worthy Mr. Elijah Bowman, not being very well up in church history and not taking much notice of what had been said, thought the rector had something the matter with him and had just put out his hand to take the man by the collar and set him on his feet when the prostration ceased and the rector arose.

The vestrymen were all more or less awed, as the rector meant they should be. The first one to recover himself was Mr. Griffin, but his previous fierceness was so far subdued that he touched Elijah Bowman under the table and whispered:

“Ask him about the name.”

“Ask him yourself,” replied that worthy, with a scowl.

“Did you wish to speak about anything, Mr. Griffin?” condescendingly asked the rector.

“Oh, it was nothing of much importance,” replied Mr. Griffin in faltering accents. “I merely did not understand the significance of the new name.”

Mr. Denny, who had been asleep owing to his over-fatigue from brain work the previous evening at the minstrels, awoke at this juncture, and, with his ever-ready ha, ha, ha, and te, he, he, said:

“A name? What’s in a name? The Bible says a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

"I was speaking to the rector, if you please, Mr. Denny," said the irascible Griffin.

"Yes, and I am very glad to have you ask any questions on any subjects that trouble you," replied the rector sweetly. "The principal significance of the name chosen by the committee appointed by the church" (which committee, it may be a matter of interest to the reader to know, was that of one, and he the rector) "lies in the fact that it is so harmoniously euphonic. Then the initials of the name are extremely handsome combined in a monogram or taken singly. You should see them as they are being worked on some altar cloths. I trust, gentlemen, the reasons I have given for the changes in the name or any of the institutions of your church commend themselves to your judgment and understanding."

Mr. Elijah Bowman was on his feet in a minute:

"As I have said before, Rector, I am a plain man, and what commends or discommends itself to my judgment or understanding is not of much account. The old name of this church—St. Christopher—was dear to me, but it's the church itself as is dearer than all. In it my father and his father before him were baptized, confirmed, held office, were married, and from it they were finally received up into glory. Now, it's my intention to stick by this church through every change of administration or fortune. I shall swallow what I don't like with as good grace as I can, but I shall support the church to the end of the chapter, and I think we all, belonging as we do to its communion and holding office, ought to make a similar resolution. I wish to acknowledge that in the past I have not performed my duties as I should. My business has been so absorbing I have devoted but little time to the duties I know devolve on me as vestryman in this church."

There was a decided movement of uneasiness on the

part of Mr. Bowman's hearers, for, as he had been by far the most conscientious in the performance of his duties (and, indeed, it might be added, the only one who had been *at all* conscientious), his acknowledgment of failure in duty acted like prods and penetrated even the thick coverings that enclosed the moral natures of all those who listened to him.

The rector gained his feet with becoming regard to a dignified decorum at the close of Mr. Bowman's remarks, and said:

"Gentlemen, our brother has put the matter rather strongly. I would not have you feel compunctions for any lapse in duty save in the matter of liberality. I know men of business find it impossible to be present at all the gatherings they would like to attend. But if you will send your checks your absence, which, of course, I deplore, may be condoned."

The meeting at this point broke up its formal character, and the members strayed off in different directions.

"What are some of the other changes in customs that have been effected?" inquired Mr. Islip of the rector when only he and Mr. Denny remained.

"Oh, scarcely anything has been altered save the introduction of incense burning, praying to the host and the confessional."

"The confessional, eh?" said Mr. Islip, looking narrowly at the rector out of his keen eyes and stroking his heavy side-whiskers. "That gives a man the opportunity of committing sin without being a sinner, doesn't it?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the irrepressible Denny. "You have a long head, Islip. Gad! you're the most congenial man I ever met inside a church."

"The object of the confessional," said the rector, "is to remove the possibility of a man's being given over to despair on account of sin."

"That's what I want," replied Islip, with a wicked wink at his admirer, Mr. Denny, who forthwith went off into convulsions of laughter. "I do not want to be thrown into despair on account of any little variation from a straight line my course of conduct may take."

"Then I may look to you two gentlemen for support in furthering the interests of this church, may I?" asked the rector.

"Indeed you may!" replied the two men together, cordially extending their hands.

"Oh, yes, and then there was another subject that I meant to discuss with my vestrymen!" exclaimed the rector. He thought the rest had gone, but they had only wandered into adjoining rooms, and to his surprise and discomfiture appeared in the different doors of the apartment at these words. It was the rector's intention to wait until those had actually departed from whom he feared opposition before presenting the important measure of the day, but it was too late to retreat and hardly time to think up anything else, so he continued:

"Gentlemen, you are aware that the Mission of this church is endowed. Since taking charge I have so administered its affairs that there has been a saving of three thousand dollars of its usual annual expenditures, and I have an opportunity of investing that amount at thirty per cent. I——"

"Where? Where?" asked Islip, grasping the rector's hand and excitedly wringing it. "Tell me all about it, and my wife shall give me——"

"Don't you know better than to interrupt the rector?" asked Bowman.

"Yes, Mr. Islip, I will gladly give the particulars," replied the church dignitary. "I had little else to say except that I presumed you would be glad to know I had been so fortunate."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Denny. "Wish there'd been an endowment for the church instead of the Mission. Been fine thing for us poor fellers. Ha! ha! ha! Te! he! he! he!"

"I thought you would approve. I suppose there need nothing more be said on the subject," returned the rector, anxiety for change of theme being plainly discernible.

"I should like to ask why it would not be well to refer the matter to a committee?" asked Mr. Elijah Bowman.

"Bah! committee!" exclaimed Islip. "What are they good for except for fighting each other?"

"All right, Mr. Islip, if you are in a position to declare from personal observation that the Mission is in a flourishing condition and does not need the money!" exclaimed Mr. Elijah Bowman.

A laugh greeted this remark, for Mr. Islip's "personal observation" of the Mission was known to be confined to his longing glances cast at the money put in the plates for that object when it chanced to fall to his lot to collect the offerings on the Sabbath.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. THATCHER APPEARS INOPPORTUNELY.

THE discussion of the question whether the three thousand dollars could be spared from the expenses of the Mission and who should be named as members of the committee to investigate the matter, was just at its height when a rustling was heard at the door, followed by a gentle knock. Mr. Elijah Bowman answered the summons and a sweet faced lady (Mr. Bowman thought he had never seen a sweeter) asked:

"Excuse me, but I understood there was to be a meeting of the wardens and vestrymen of the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven here this morning and knowing that Mission matters would be discussed I thought it might be well for me to be present."

In reply to the inquiring look on all the gentlemen's countenances saving the rector's, Mr. Bowman said:

"Gentlemen, this is Mrs. Thatcher, who has been in charge of our Mission work—how many years?" turning to the lady.

"Ten years, praise God! And, gentlemen, believe me they have been ten blessed years of service. I sometimes am filled with astonishment that such an unworthy person as I should be allowed the privilege of working with the Lord for his poor and needy ones. It is a *glorious* privilege, one that we can be united in. You by prayer and furnishing the means and I, by earnest, faithful work."

Mrs. Thatcher's ardent, homely eloquence carried every-

thing along with it. Even Mr. Denny forgot to ho, ho, ho, and te, he, he, and Mr. Islip wished he had not joked about the confessional. The rector endeavored to hide his chagrin by folding his arms and looking very solemn. And good reason he had for looking solemn. He knew the three thousand dollars had been saved by pinching and screwing down the expenditures in a way that a less consecrated whole-souled person than Mrs. Thatcher would have resented and shown her resentment by leaving. In fact he had been ready to receive her resignation for some time past. But he had never dreamed of her taking this step and during her remarks his brain was busy devising plausible excuses for his conduct. To give the real, true explanation—that he had been hampered in his outlay for vestments and incense and choir boy salary and building of confessional corridor and wanted to make an investment which would be free from the restrictions of the fund devoted to the Mission—he did not feel would exalt him in the eyes of his brethren.

Mr. Denny gave him a suggestion. Mrs. Thatcher had described her work among the mothers, had told how she had been able to lighten the heavy burdens resting on many a poor woman by furnishing cloth for them to make up into garments, where want of work or sickness had prevented them from buying this for themselves. She had brought tears to their eyes at the picture she drew of the dear little babies sheltered and cared for during their mothers' absence at work. She had been very careful (altogether too careful, considering the nature of the men she was addressing and whom the rarity of meeting made it impossible for her to know better) not to hurt their feelings by the portrayal of the difficulties she had been surrounded with of late by lack of funds.

"I had hoped, gentlemen, as the needs of the work in-

creased," she said, her face beaming with the inward light of a holy consecrated life, "that means would be forthcoming to extend our borders. There are no babies in the city of New York that look healthier and happier than our babies and it would be *such* a comfort to have enough room and enough help so as to take every poor, miserable, thin, hungry, dirty child that is brought to us and surround it with all the comforts God has so graciously given us.

"I cannot express the pain it gives me to be obliged to stand at the door mornings and make a distinction between those that can stay and those that cannot. And the number has had to be reduced several times of late, yet in spite of all my care I find it extremely difficult to settle my accounts and make both ends meet. It is my aim to make my money go just as far as I can and I think I can truthfully say that the same spirit animates all my helpers. I have a lad who runs errands for me; we call him *Lame Johnnie* to distinguish him from others of the same name. I rescued him from drunken parents and his lameness is the result of their abuse. This poor child refuses to take car fare when he goes long distances although it is hard work for him to walk, and when I insist on giving him the money he brings it back and says:

"*'Mamma Thatch, I can save so little, please let me help in this way.'*

"But in spite of all our efforts, gentlemen, our finances are in a bad condition. We are behindhand and——"

Mr. Denny, who had as usual been dozing and only heard the last two sentences of Mrs. Thatcher's touching address, rose hastily to his feet at this point and said:

"I know just what this woman needs, gentlemen."

Cries of "Hear, hear," from Mr. Islip and several others and "By all means let us hear, brother," from the rector,

encouraged Mr. Denny to cherish the conviction (he was not at all averse to holding) of his great sagacity. He therefore raised his right arm impressively and said:

"She needs, or I may say she requires, or perhaps to state the case in the plainest possible manner, I had better say she ought to have lessons in economy. It is a sad state of affairs when our finances get in a bad condition." Here Mr. Denny brought his uplifted right hand in to his outstretched left hand with a resounding and, evidently to himself, edifying whack. "It is all wrong to get behindhand, gentlemen! Te——" but he suppressed the rest of his customary te, he, he, which was occasioned by his catching Mr. Islip's eye winking approval at him, and continued: "And, gentlemen, I don't know of any better place to suggest that she go to learn economy than to my daughter's club. Here are some cards which my daughter gave me only this morning." He handed one to Mr. Bowman who passed it to Mrs. Thatcher. "Now who could suggest an easier way out of this difficulty? Go to this club—learn economy—don't let your finances get in a bad condition; then you never get behindhand—your work goes on smoothly—and everything is hunk"—(but he saved himself from the rest of that slang, it occurring to him that "hunckidory" was not an appropriate expression to use in a church) "eh, Islip, let us hear what you think on the subject."

Mr. Islip was glad to be called on, for he considered himself, however much his wife differed from him, a first-class financier. He arose therefore and dwelt feelingly on the benefit to nations, peoples, communities and individuals of the exercise of economy. The writer is unable to state whether or not Mr. Islip's remarks would have had more weight had they not been punctuated, so to speak, by large diamond rings on both hands. But they were applauded

by Mr. Denny and Rector Mortimer Augustus Dunraven, the latter following in a dissertation of great oratorical elegance on the same subject.

Mr. Elijah Bowman was plainly disturbed by the tenor of the remarks. His chair was first too far from the table and then it was too near. He tried leaning on one arm and then on another, all the time keeping a furtive watch of Mrs. Thatcher's countenance. Her eyes being attracted to his own once or twice, he was apparently seized with a desire for profound meditation and covered his face with his hand, but the spaces between his fingers allowed his watch to be kept up. And no one would have thought of blaming Mr. Bowman, for Mrs. Thatcher's face, especially when she came in and while she was speaking, was wonderfully attractive. Her blue eyes looked out from under her smooth low forehead with such a sincere kindly expression. Her grey hair, naturally wavy, added a silvery halo to features which were irradiated by that inner glory of a life given entirely up to the love of God and of her fellow man. But a cloud of disappointment came over the cheerfulness of her expression as the remarks of Mr. Denny and the two gentlemen who followed him, progressed. There was no resentment visible, as well there might have been, only disappointment and grief, and when the rector was bringing his remarks to a close she put up her hand and brushed something that bore a strong resemblance to a tear from her face. This was all that was needed to bring Mr. Elijah Bowman's dissatisfaction to a climax. He rose to his feet impetuously.

"Gentlemen," he said, while he scowled his fiercest, "I am a plain man and cannot talk a lot of tom-fool nonsense about all the nations of the earth! But even to my limited understanding it seems extremely queer to be talking economy to a person, you ought to be taking up a collection

for. Now there's my hat with a fifty-dollar bill in it, ready for Denny to put a hundred on top of and Griffin one hundred more."

There was so much truth in Bowman's remarks and they were delivered with such force that in spite of themselves the gentlemen referred to put their hands in their pockets and gave what they were bidden. Some of the others present venturing a whispered doubt as to whether or not the money would be wisely used, Mr. Bowman asked:

"Have you ever been over to see?"

"Hush!" came the answer, "don't talk so loud! We did not mean anything."

And Bowman smiled a grim smile to see their contribution, which he knew was greatly increased to satisfy a lazy conscience.

As Mr. Elijah Bowman returned from closing the door on Mrs. Thatcher, to whom he had delivered the entire contribution, feigning not to see the rector's movement intimating that he would take charge of the money, still scowling he said:

"A passage of Scripture occurs to me as exceedingly appropriate to the case of the good lady who has just left us. It runs something like this: 'Being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.'"

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. METTLE REVEALS THE SKELETON IN HER CLOSET.

"WHY, mummy, your maid is getting your hair up too high. It looks like the leaning tower of Pisa."

"No, Ray, now do not interfere! Silva is obeying orders. I picked out this style from costume plates of the fashions in France in the 16th century and I know it will be very odd and becoming."

"Odd, it certainly will be, but as yet there are no signs of its being becoming."

"Now, Ray, I would not show such a jealous disposition. It looks as though you were afraid your mother, who has not much longer to live, might look a little better than you do. You will remember such things when I am gone."

"But, mummy, supposing I should go first, how would you feel for outshining me and spoiling my chances of matrimony?"

"Ray," replied Mrs. Mettle solemnly, "it is base ingratitude for you even in joke to hint at my spoiling your chances at matrimony, for if ever a mother tried to do her duty by her daughter in that respect I am the one. But I can just tell you what it is, my lady, I am very nearly through with it all!" And Mrs. Mettle rising from the chair in token of the finishing of her hair-dressing dismissed her maid so that she might be alone with her daughter for a few minutes. Both ladies were attired in weird foreign-looking Japanese negligee costumes. The ground work of Mrs. Mettle's was black with storks and cranes and

swallows and snakes and warriors and angels and devils embroidered in all sorts of gay colors, slantwise over the gown so that when she moved it seemed as though she must go sideways. Miss Mettle's on the other hand was of a tawny yellow with the same number of birds, reptiles and creeping things embroidered in black, making one think of a leopard-skin. It was only necessary to have had a black caldron with a few black imps to do their bidding and they would have figured excellently well as priestesses of the Black Art.

"It makes me weep when I think of all the trials and vexations I have been through on your account!" Here Mrs. Mettle produced a Japanese rice-paper handkerchief and removed the moisture from the corner of one eye (that is, if there was any, which we would never think of being so reckless as to positively affirm). "I began when you were fifteen so that I never could accuse myself of being too late. The first year there were two doctors, three ministers and a lawyer—they all of them received valuable additions to their libraries—invitations to lunch, tea and dinner, and what with trying to keep the peace between you all till you could make up your mind, which you wanted I was nearly driven crazy."

"Well, they were a crazy lot!" returned Miss Mettle carelessly. "But I presume I should have had Jack Benson the lawyer."

"You really think so? Why, you never told me that before!"

"What was the use? He married some one else before I was quite sure I wanted him. But he has made such a successful man I ought to have had him."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! how much worry, vexation, and care I might have been spared if that had only taken place!" And Mrs. Mettle, throwing up her short arms

from which her long Japanese sleeves fell in lengthened folds, made a very tolerable, not to say picturesque, representation of Woe.

"And then if I had married him and he had not turned out successful, you would have had your worry, vexation and care over something else."

"But it could not have been as bad as it is now."

"I believe you would rather I were married to some Solomon Levi of an old clothes man than to be an O——"

"Hush, Ray, don't let that name pass your lips even in jest. I am superstitious to the extent that I believe if you begin to call yourself by any title you are sure to become what you call yourself."

"Well, can't I say O. M. when I wish to refer to the opprobrious class of beings?"

"I would rather you would not."

"Then I shall have to say Ho, H'm's, for I must have some means of designating what I refer to."

Mrs. Mettle had seated herself in a quaint, straight, high-backed chair, a table of Mexican onyx with gilt trimmings at her side and a high foot stool of gilt and embroidery before her to prevent her little feet from dangling. She picked up some fancy work and commenced the following soliloquy:

"I never could understand why things should have been made so hard for me. I have known mothers with six or seven daughters who did not seem to have nearly as hard a time as I have. But I am sure one more girl would have made me a madwoman or an imbecile long ago. The uncertainty, the flickering, the just-about-ed-ness and the never-quite-there-ed-ness have kept me in a constant state of perturbation bordering on despair. I was consoled for your losing that count, Ray, when he was speedily followed by the duke, but——"

"Oh, I did not know but you were going to say you were consoled for my losing the count when you found he was a gambler and a knave."

"But to have you lose both those titled foreigners seemed too much to be borne," continued Mrs. Mettle, unmindful of the interruption. "And now your chances are growing beautifully less year by year."

"While there's life there is hope," responded Miss Mettle cheerfully.

"That's a shamelessly immoral sentiment to hold in connection with such a serious subject as we are discussing, Ray Mettle!" exclaimed Mrs. Mettle, shaking her head until the towering coiffure just trembled to its foundations and her very eyeglasses dropped in dismay. "And if you do not change your motto and your whole course of conduct I shall wipe my hands of all part or lot in your future."

"Change my conduct?" replied Miss Mettle finally roused. "What do you mean by change my conduct? I want to be married as much as ever you want to have me; and it always has *been* and always *will* be my aim to do my best toward accomplishing that most desirable object. But——"

"For shame, Ray! how can you say that when here you are treating that beautiful, charming Mr. Grout in such a whimsical manner? He's just *my* beau ideal of a son-in-law; he has such a deep nice voice! It nearly brings tears to my eyes now when he says 'Mrs. Mettle'; what *would* it be when he called me mother? Moreover, he goes in the very best society,—better than we could ever think of aspiring to unaided by such connections."

"Yes, but then he does not, nor ever could, hold the position in that society that a bishop might!"

"A bishop! what do you mean by that? Who do you know that's eligible among the bishops?"

"Why, that Mr. Dunraven who has lent us the money for the club and who was here to dinner last week. He is the son and nephew of bishops and there is no doubt but if he cares for the position he will get it. And there's every probability he will care for such an honorable office."

"Oh, but, Ray, such a scrawny, ill-favored youth, not a hair on his face except a feeble sickly mustache. And he must be younger than you."

"So much the easier to make him do as I want to have him."

"But I am sure somebody told me he was a celibate. I remember thinking at the time what a small loss to the world either present or future."

"Oh, well! that's a little fad with him just now, but I know he can easily be turned off from such nonsense. His church is poor when it comes to the expenses or the rector's salary, though Sundays you can hardly get a seat there because of the crowd."

"Then you've made up your mind to give up the congressman for the priest, have you?"

"Why, no, of course I have not. I have made up my mind to try and get the priest, but if I cannot get him I shall take the congressman. He will be in the market some time; you know widowers—well, there's no rush for them. And he appears quite fond of me."

"Yes, but I have to work hard with him and I have promised him all sorts of things. What *shall* I do?"

"Temporize with him. Put him off. We must not offend him."

"And he is so impatient and hot-headed."

"Well, we can be a little offended because he does not help more with the expenses of the club. I do not understand

why he is so remiss in this particular. Of course, he has plenty of money. I would not look at him if I did not feel sure of that."

"Oh, Ray, that club does make me feel so free from all uneasiness when they are begging at the churches. I *do* think we are such a generous family. Don't you think, love, we shall go down to posterity by the side of Peabody and all such noted philanthropists?"

"Of course we shall, mummy, but that does not satisfy me. I want to be known and read about to-day!"

"Well, there was something in this morning's paper, was there not?"

"But only five or six lines! I paid ever so many reporters to put in articles which they have not done."

"Never mind, dear, I will write you a check of five hundred dollars and you can visit the editors of some of the leading dailies at their homes. You know the reporters cannot control such matters. And now how do you wish me to treat the priest? I suppose we had better rent a couple of pews in his church."

"Chapel he calls it, Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven. Yes, a capital thought. It never would have occurred to me."

"Ah, well, my dear," replied Mrs. Mettle, while a knowing smile irradiated her small features and caused her black eyes to sparkle with animation, "you have not been called upon to deal with such delicate matters as matrimonial alliances in which forethought and a thousand other activities of the soul are called into play." Mrs. Mettle did not add "and generally in vain," though in her case it would have been only too true.

"Perhaps we had better rent three seats," rejoined the daughter, "and then there is a confessional."

"A confessional!" fairly screamed Mrs. Mettle, over-

come by surprise. "Why I thought the man was an Episcopalian. You never told me he was a Romanist. I think, Ray, that is going a trifle too far."

"He is *not* a Romanist; he is only a high church Episcopalian, an advanced thinker."

"And he has advanced in to the dark ages for methods of carrying on church work! Oh, well, I suppose it's all for a good cause, to rouse curiosity and make his church popular. You say he is successful, eh? Well, Ray," this rather musingly, as if Mrs. Mettle were inspecting her heart and taking an inventory of her sins, "I suppose I could go to confession, but I am sure I do not know what I should confess. Your sins now, I could give a good long list of and your father's too. I would not miss one!"

"You could, could you?" said Mr. Mettle, entering in time to hear his wife's remark. "And I should like to know what sins you'd find to confess for me?"

"Now, Tuftus Mettle, don't be so conceited. You have a great many sins you ought to confess. In the first place untruthfulness. You told me this morning, I was late to breakfast when——"

"You were," interrupted her husband.

"I beg your pardon, but I was *not*; and then you could confess the sin of stealing. This morning you took the watch I was depending on to get me to my dressmaker's and left me with no reliable timepiece, so that I was late and Madame was very furious."

"Well, that was my own watch."

"Never mind if it was. I had told you to leave it with me and it was stealing——"

"Or disobedience," interposed the daughter.

"Yes, perhaps it was disobedience, but that's a worse sin than stealing."

"Well, what do you call your telling that pot-house poli-

tician Grout that you and Ray have taken to coddling so tenderly of late that your daughter was out and she would be so sorry to miss his call; would'nt he be sure and come again to-morrow, while Ray hung over the bannisters on the third floor to hear what reply he made? Or what name do you give to the professions of affection you made to Mrs. De Flurey while the minute she left the room you declared that she was the most odious woman you ever knew?"

"Now, Tuftus," replied his wife, "don't try to make out that you have lived to this time of life and are so innocent of the absolute necessity of a little polite equivocation occasionally."

"Well, my dear, it is a great pity you are not eligible to the office of Pope, and Ray to some Arch-Cardinalship, you both have the happy faculty of believing in your own infallibility at all events, which is half the battle. But come let us descend from theology to gastronomy and go down to dinner."

CHAPTER XII.

MISS DENNY GRAPPLES WITH THE PROBLEM.

THERE are times in all our lives when we find reason to approve of natural laws and one of those times came to me (*viz.*: Mrs. Winn) when I realized that Miss Denny's week of managing affairs had only the ordinary number of evenings. If there had been one more I felt that my overtaxed powers of endurance would have certainly given way. The first night she spent teaching the girls the German, and as I had nothing to do except some light visiting all day and climbing five or six pairs of stairs, and needed diversion, she called on me to assist. I can laugh now, as I look back and think what a peculiar figure I must have cut, but at the time I did not find it amusing. I had never danced the German, nor anything else, even in my youth when my muscles were a good deal more tractable than at forty-five. I did the best I could, however. I never questioned Miss Denny on the subject, but from her course of conduct I inferred the "elevation" she considered necessary "for the masses" was to be obtained at the end of the toes.

My readers will not be surprised to hear that Miss Denny was a light, airy dancer; indeed, I have intimated as much in a previous connection, but nature had never designed her to be a teacher. She had no patience, and her temper was of the most volatile description. Just as in the case of the carpenters whom she requested to repair the rooms without deigning to enter into detail,

so she would give a long list of commands, and if the girls did not execute them the air was filled with the raps they received from a piece of rolled music she held in her hand together with names far from complimentary. The more obtuse were handed over to me, while the German girl she chased out of the room, threatening her if she ever darkened the doors again, "to box her up and send her to some museum as a specimen of a perfectly jointless woman."

In the middle of the evening she suddenly put her hands to her head and declared she had almost forgotten an engagement and she should have to leave immediately, but I must continue drilling the girls in the "Crescent Sweep," the "Fan Flutter," the "Cadet March" and several other fancy figures of the German, and I was not to allow any of them to leave before they had learned these figures, if they stayed until morning. The girls were wild with excitement and delight, for the dance was to take place the following evening, and they all felt ambitious to excel. They carried me along with them, their enjoyment seemed so great, until my strength and my breath gave way and I sank exhausted on the sofa. As they gathered around me I had only power to whisper, "Go home," when there came a unanimous cry, "Oh, no, Mrs. Winn, we must do these steps a little better for to-morrow night. Just think of the fun we shall have to-morrow night, each one with a fellow! Miss Denny said she'd get each of us a fellow that didn't have one. And now you just lie there on that sofa with the two fingers of your right hand up and you need not say a word, but when we ask you if we've done the step right, you can shake them this way and, if not, that way."

In a weak moment, I yielded, and for a time I signified my approval or disapproval in the manner they

suggested, but finally "tired Nature's Sweet Restorer" took entire possession of me, and when I returned to consciousness faint gleams of daylight were mingling with the sickly glare of the gas. I looked around and there were still a dozen or so infatuated girls going through the various figures.

"Girls!" I cried, starting up suddenly and bringing my foot down with such promptness that several screamed with fright, "what are you here for at this time in the morning?"

Having nothing to say, they proceeded to depart.

The enthusiasm in regard to the evening's entertainment had spread so rapidly that before time to light the lamps quite a number were waiting for the doors to open. Miss Denny was greatly elated when she arrived and found the rooms so nearly full. "I thought I understood the needs of the hour," she exclaimed, tossing her head and endeavoring to look wise, but it was hard work beneath the tall structure of feathery vanity that adorned her head. But finally when the hour had passed for beginning the festivities and she could hardly make her way across the room she concluded the need of that particular hour was a little more room. I was in the alcove where the bronze statue of Lincoln, already referred to, was placed and I felt myself becoming gradually hemmed in until the Proclamation of Emancipation in the extended hand of the figure was nearly buried in my back. Panting and breathless, Miss Denny reached me, having left portions of her lace dress at odd intervals on her way.

"I cannot have this!" she exclaimed pettishly, as though I had been smuggling the people in on purpose to annoy her. "Now you must get these people, some of them, out of here."

"If I can get out myself, I can very easily do that," I replied meekly. "The police will help me."

"But you need not ask the police. I do not wish the girls offended," Miss Denny replied.

"If you had used tickets as I suggested, this——"

"What business have you making suggestions, any way?" Miss Denny hissed under her breath, for she wished, on the surface, to appear the fair and genial hostess. "Go to that party of Germans standing around the door and tell them—— Did you ever see the audacity!" This exclamation was elicited by her discovery that Lena Deckenbachschmitt, the German girl who had roused her ire, was present in spite of the threat attached to her appearance. "You must get that girl out right away. I do not care how many police you take for that piece of work. But the others, just ask them, quietly, but firmly, to go."

This injunction I proceeded to carry out as soon as I could work my toilsome way through the crowd, which every minute was increasing.

But gentleness and firmness were entirely thrown away on the party of Germans by the door. I felt convinced these people understood what I was saying to them.

"I am sorry," I began, "I shall have to ask you to leave this room."

Broad, beaming smiles appeared on their heavy features and they replied without moving an inch:

"Yah, yah, werry goot, werry goot!"

"You do not understand what I say," I replied, thinking this time I would try pantomime. "This room, here, in this place," accompanying each word with a gesticulation which I hoped might carry to their eye the meaning their ear refused to conceive.

"You must go out from—you must leave, you must depart, you must retire, you must vacate, you must—you must——" my list of synonyms becoming exhausted, I continued pointing energetically out of the door. A blankness and utter absence of all expression overspread their faces which made me feel as though the Stone Wall of China would be scintillating with fire and intelligence in comparison.

A grunt and "Ich nicht verstehen," was all the notice they deigned to any further remarks from me. I was not equal to picking up their massive frames, and I had no derrick to hoist the cumbersome loads out of the way, so they stood craning their necks and jostling each other in order to see something, with no other result than to see hundreds of others engaged in a similar occupation the entire evening through.

The girls showed their dissatisfaction with the way the evening had turned out by all staying at home the following evening, except Lena Deckenbachschmitt. She appeared just as Miss Denny was expressing her dissatisfaction with me for not reducing the crowd!

Her black eyes were snapping, her thin arms were waving round and the fearfully and wonderfully made millinery on her head was quivering under the excitement of the wearer. Her enunciation, never deliberate, was increased to three hundred words a minute. When she caught sight of Lena she darted at her and shook her straw-colored hair down about her ears, crying at the top of her voice: "Didn't I tell you to go home? Didn't I tell you to go home, stupid creature?"

"Yah, yah," responded the imperturbable German, "and I goed. Why for you use me bad like dis?"

"Because you were to go home and *stay* home and never to darken these doors again, dolt!"

The German immediately began to whimper: "No-pody's ever told me to dolt pefore, and Ich nicht verstehen. I *vill* dolt if anypodies vill show me."

"You need not trouble yourself about dolting," exclaimed Miss Denny, laughing in spite of herself at the ludicrous figure of the half-scared, half-weeping, but wholly obstinate Lena. "You need not trouble yourself about anything but just staying away from here and never returning."

"Oh, yah, yah, 'return,' dat iss to come back. I vill comes some oder days but not to-day. Pisness must pe seen to, eh? so!" and reaching the door Lena dropped at least all of a curtsy that her little stiff knees and joints would allow and said, "Gute Nacht" with the air of a person compelled to leave dear friends.

I received instructions to visit all the following day and to promise the girls a fine supper on the last evening of the week if they would be present the three remaining evenings. And I was to procure tickets in order to avoid a repetition of the crowd.

"I feel anxious to have a good number out especially the last evening, because my father has invited a Mrs. Islip to be present—an immensely wealthy woman—and if I can only get her interested she will enable me to show Ray Mettle and Annie Hopper a thing or two!"

It was fortunate for me that I had taken a few of the girls' addresses. For I visited them and obtained the names of others so that the following evening the rooms were well filled again. I enjoyed this work of visiting. The look of surprise and pleasure with which the girls greeted me if I went to their places of business, or their mothers, if I went to their homes, repaid me amply for the fatigue of climbing stairs or of walking in directions where no horse cars could carry me.

I wonder if it will be imposing on the credulity of my

readers when I say that in my visiting I found ways of using money that seemed to me would accomplish fully as much good as spending it for big suppers? But it is scarcely necessary for me to add that I did not feel called upon to give the three fair philanthropists the benefit of my reflections. Indeed, it would have been extremely dangerous for my peace of mind or further connection with the enterprise to have done so at this juncture of affairs, for the long-coveted notices in the daily papers began to appear and the young ladies were greatly elated.

A column in one paper, a column and a half in another, and three-quarters of a column in a third, all leading dailies, gave the public to understand that there was commenced a charity in New York city which in importance, in extent, in generosity, and unprecedented magnanimity had never been previously equaled. Brief sketches of the three young ladies at the head of the enterprise were given. These sketches were designed and colored according to the most approved angelic models. Their unselfish devotion to their noble undertaking was feelingly portrayed; and as to their heroism in opposing all obstacles to the carrying out of their wonderful project, it was set forth in such a thrilling manner that big, salt, briny tears fell from Miss Hopper's eyes as she read, threatening to be followed by others until there might have been an inundation. This catastrophe was averted, however, by her coming across a passage in the account where she was referred to as "Miss Popper." Immediately the saline moisture was dried by her fiery indignation. She sat down in trembling and indignant haste and indited a missive to the editor which he is known to have pigeon-holed and marked a "Philippic to be used in hottest Political warfare; perhaps in the next Presidential Election Campaign."

CHAPTER XIII.

CURRENTS AND COUNTER-CURRENTS.

I FEEL that I am devoting more time than I ought, to Miss Denny's first week at the head of the club, but I cannot pursue another topic until I give the occurrences of the last evening.

There were tickets to be taken this evening, as the supper which Miss Denny had promised the girls was to come from the best caterer in the city.

Kipp Grassey was on hand and insisted on standing on one side of the door to help me receive the tickets. In the lulls between the arrivals he remarked, with his accustomed attempt to generalize:

"They have not *all* been present the past week?"

"How do you come to be so wise?" I asked, for he had kept out of sight and I knew he referred to Agnes Dearborn's absence, concerning which he wished an explanation.

"Oh, come, Mrs. Winn, you must not make fun of a fellow. You know I am not wise and never shall be. I wish I might know as much as—as you, for instance."

I laughed heartily at this oft-repeated compliment and said: "I have noticed that some people are always free with their compliments when they are desirous of eliciting information on certain subjects."

"Gad! but there is no use in beating round the bush with you—you are so clever you see through a fellow just like chain lightning! So I might just as well tell

you what I was coming to! It was this—you know I haven't given you any flowers for a week, and to-night I am going to bring you flowers and a two-pound box of Huyler's candies—eh, Mrs. Winn? Now don't say no. If you do, it will be five dollars thrown away, for that's what they cost, and into the gutter they will go if they cannot be given to the one they were bought for." And Mr. Kipp Grassey's usually expressionless face was so transfigured by the presence of a determined idea as to be almost unrecognizable. I looked at him, smiling, for he had undergone a change which was pleasant to contemplate in the short time since we had first met. He no longer scorned to appear in a waistcoat and tie the second time. His light, straw-colored hair which he had formerly worn rather long and parted exactly in the middle of a peak-shaped head, giving it the appearance of a thatched roof, was now kept shorter and parted in more mannish wise. He still carried canes, but they were not such large, outlandish-headed things, and were to be seen less frequently in his mouth.

"I say, Mrs. Winn, I don't like the looks of a man and woman who have been following some one for a day or two back."

"Why, what makes you think they are following her?" I asked anxiously, my mind returning to what Agnes had told me of her legal difficulties.

"You know, Mrs. Winn, she has had to go down to her store evenings?"

I nodded, for Agnes had said she should be in the court-room several hours in the afternoon and she had obtained permission to make up that absence at night.

"Well, a night or two ago, Mrs. Winn, I happened to come up Broadway behind her" (I was amused to hear him use the term "*happen*"), "but between us was a nasty, dirty-

looking man, with long, curly, black hair on his shoulders and a devilish leer on his face. He was walking with a squint-eyed, evil-looking woman, and I overheard him say to her: 'There's our lamb! Look sharp, so you'll be sure and know her in the dark or with your eyes bored out—that is what little you have left'—and the man laughed as though at a pleasant jest! You may be sure, Mrs. Winn, I have been on hand every night since, and last night I saw that same woman, dressed like a beggar, come up and say a lot of stuff; as I got near she took hold of some one's arm, and I inferred she was getting off the old dodge about her family of children starving and wanting some one to come in and see them. I tell you, Mrs. Winn, I was nearly dead with fear, for some one had started to follow! How I wished you might have happened along with your bright ideas! I have never said anything to some one, you know, Mrs. Winn, so I knew it would not be proper then and she would have probably gone with the woman to have got rid of me. The only thing that occurred to me to do was to run against her as by accident and send her (we were just at the corner of the street) on to the crossing, which I did, and two or three teams coming along just then kept her on the other side, while I flourished my cane around the head of the old hag, who disappeared at a rattling pace in the opposite direction."

I had no time to express the dismay with which this recital filled me, because at that instant I happened to look toward the stairs and there my old enemies, the stolid-faced Germans, were coming up in numbers and sizes sufficient to exclude every other nationality from an area twice the extent of that at our disposal.

"Oh, Mr. Grassey, those Germans! we must keep them out!" I cried excitedly.

Their motions were so deliberate that it was easy enough for us to get outside the door and lock it from without before they were ready to enter.

Here was an instance of superhuman effort being put forth not to elevate, but to lower the masses—to the extent of one pair of stairs at all events—and the effort came very near being of equal avail in the one case as in the other. I argued and gesticulated with the imperturbable crowd, and Mr. Grassey ran his hand through his hair, as was his wont in agitated moments, and tried to look fierce, as he said:

“Look here, now, you must get out of this!”

I whispered, “Perhaps it would be well to flourish your cane a little.”

“Oh, never,” he returned, almost sinking down behind me, at the mere idea. “Those fellows are big enough to throw me into next week. Besides they are not trying to hurt some one as the old woman was!”

Just then our attention was diverted by the cries of a child, “Oh, Mummer Islip, Mummer Islip, come get me out!” it shouted lustily. We looked and beheld a head of beautiful curls between the legs of one of the tallest of the Germans and inferred that the little owner in working his way upstairs had passed between, what probably appeared to him two posts, but the two posts had suddenly changed their position and caught the curls, head and all. There was no need, however, of a suggestion that the prisoner be released, for the scratchings and bitings which young Master Grout began to lavish upon his captor supplied the idea instantly. The father of the lad soon appeared with “Mummer Islip,” and to the former I applied for assistance.

I had read of the wonderful power of sound but in all my previous life I had never witnessed a better illustration. African travellers tell us that the greatest power of the

lion—that king of beasts—lies not in tail or paw, although either will easily slay a man, but in the deep soul-terrifying roar, which unnerves and paralyzes the stoutest native heart.

Mr. K. Roundout Grout began forthwith to treat those Germans to a good imitation of the lion's roar. They probably did not understand *one* word he said, for he enunciated his words very poorly. But he succeeded in conveying to their inert understandings an apprehensiveness of future ill, founded on present deep thunder peals, which made them shake their heads dejectedly and turn to go downstairs, uttering their favorite "Yah, so." And when the biggest had their backs fairly turned you could not have asked for a more valiant brave than Mr. Grasse. His cane fairly darkened the brightness of the gas he used it so freely, shaking it over friend and foe. But the most amusing sight was young Grout attempting to gesticulate and vociferate to ape his father. The excitement was so high at first we did not notice him, but as the Germans departed and there was greater calm and more space for the little fellow to prance around in, his efforts were greeted with shouts of appreciative laughter. There was the same jerk to the head and brandishing of the arms and in the baby voice the attempt to carry dismay to the heart of his adversary.

Instead of seeing in this childish attempt at imitation a tribute to his oratorical powers, Mr. K. Roundout Grout's brow darkened and he said roughly:

"I'll teach you to make people laugh at your father, you young vagabond!"

But the child bounded away to "Mummer Islip" before his father could seize him. And in the shelter of her protecting arms and stimulated by her admiring laughter and praise he proceeded to make faces at his father and render

himself otherwise as entertaining as only a bright boy can.

Miss Denny was in the midst of an intricate figure of the German, rapping and scolding the girls for their mistakes, when Mrs. Islip was ushered into the rooms of the girls' club. She left as soon as she could to greet the guest, but she did not reach her before Miss Hopper and Miss Mettle.

Coquettish is an adjective rarely required to describe the actions of a woman over fifty, but after careful searching and weighing of the meanings of various other expressions, we return to coquettish as the term best describing the attitude Mrs. Islip assumed toward her three entertainers. A favorite attitude; in fact, one that she had taken through life oftener than any other and one that she strove to emphasize by her dress and all her immediate surroundings. On the present occasion, for example, she wore an exceedingly light pearl-grey dress, with an underskirt of white, braided in gilt. Her very pretty fair hair was drawn back under the tiniest, most jaunty grey bonnet, trimmed with delicate lavender flowers. The beautiful boy she led by the hand was attired like a Highland chief, and a bonny Scotch laddie he made.

Mrs. Islip was too clever a woman not to understand the motives of the young ladies in their assiduous attentions. But, nevertheless, they pleased her. She even seemed to forget that she had previously found Miss Mettle priggish. She listened attentively to the president's lengthy recital of the needs of the enterprise, which, however, might have been condensed into one little word, *i. e.*, money. She smiled so sweetly on Miss Mettle that the others were wildly jealous. Indeed, Miss Denny felt very much discouraged when Mrs. Islip touched her lightly on the shoulder and asked:

"What did you say you have been trying to teach these girls? That one" (pointing a dainty fan at the obstinate Lena) "is going around as though she were the motive power to a four-horse power churn, while there is another one—she kinks herself up so rapidly and jumps around in such a queer manner that she makes me dizzy. Now, it seems to me—of course, I don't pretend to be a judge" (laughing and looking archly over her fan) "but still it seems to me if I made an attempt to teach anything I would teach it so other people could know what I'd been about. You know those are not considered the best pictures that have to be labelled in order to be recognized."

Miss Mettle and Miss Hopper applauded this thrust at their collaborator with great warmth.

"That's just because Miss Denny refuses to follow my advice," said Miss Mettle. "We ought to all teach the same thing."

"Well, if we taught the same thing, it ought to be poetry and the arts," stoutly asserted Miss Hopper.

"No need of all teaching the same thing, by any means," returned Mrs. Islip, with unusual sweetness—for the more crabbed people became around her, the more pleased and amiable she grew; "but what you attempt to teach, let it be done well. Above everything else, don't allow their dancing to be of such a mutilated, shambling or fierce, stiff or frantic, wild style as to be almost unrecognizable. Better they should never dance, though that would be a terrible evil!"

Poor Miss Denny winced and would have liked to make some such retort as "that her ladyship had better come and try it herself and see if she could do any better," but she contented herself with saying:

"Not being a professional, I suppose I have made mis-

takes, but, Mrs. Islip, if you had been here the last night of our most revered and honored president's week I think you would have concluded the most *she* had succeeded in teaching was the art of purloining the refreshments, and you could not have found any fault as to the lessons *not* being *well taught*, for everything was taken."

The laugh was well turned on Ray Mettle now, and Mrs. Islip joined in it as heartily as any one.

But while flaxen-haired Mrs. Islip, in her exquisite dress, is finding herself vastly entertained by her three attentive hostesses and favors them with suggestions whose importance she emphasizes with sundry taps of her delicate lace fan, I was called to the door by the report that a stranger was there inquiring the whereabouts of a "school for economy." I thought to myself as I made my way to answer this call, "A school for economy! What a rare jest some one must be trying to perpetrate on the young ladies!"

But at the door I found a sweet-faced lady, who said, handing me a card which I recognized as one of those issued by the three fair philanthropists:

"My name is Mrs. Thatcher. Mr. Denny gave me this card and advised my visiting the place indicated thereon, but," (glancing in and seeing the luxurious furnishings, the gay costumes, the waltzing, etc.,) "I must be mistaken in the locality."

"No, madam," I replied; "you are not mistaken. Those are our cards, and this is the place. Come right in and I will find you a seat," for there was something very attractive to me in the simple, straightforward manners of this newcomer. I am one who believes with Wordsworth, that "men undervalue the power of simplicity, but it is the real key to the heart."

It was impossible for me to fully appreciate the contrast between the two figures—the woman of fashion, vain, friv-

olous, capricious; dabbling in philanthropy as she dabbled in wools for her sofa cushion; courted and flattered for what she might possibly give, although no one had heard of her doing more than any one can do, namely, "get up a reputation for benevolence by judiciously laying out a few dollars"—and the modest, tender-hearted woman, the woman after God's own heart, who devoted not a limited tithe of her possessions but her all, which was herself. I say it was impossible for me to fully understand at the time the bold contrast between these two, Mrs. Islip and Mrs. Thatcher.

But now, as I am writing, it comes over me with great force, and the blush of shame mantles my cheek as I think how the one was constantly surrounded by attentive, solicitous admirers, her whimsicalities applauded and her weaknesses copied, while the other occupied the seat I gave her until out of the kindness of her heart she got up to give it to another, after which she was jostled and pushed, and would have withdrawn had I not caught sight of her in time to prevent her going. I thought it would be a mistake for her, if she was anxious to learn economy, to miss the supper of *salades*, ice creams and such like absolute necessities to the young ladies, wherewith the economical enterprise was maintained. It was impossible for me to do more, however, than get her a seat in a corner and hurriedly serve her, while at a table apart her gay, heartless contrast, Mrs. Islip, with the three fair philanthropists and other friends made merry, with plenty of elbow room and the choicest of the viands.

Any one that was of an observant turn of mind, however, would have noticed a degree less of airiness, jest and flippancy in Mrs. Islip's demeanor as she sat at the table, and the cause of this change was due to a fragment of conversation she had overheard just before she took her seat. She was engaged in chat with Rector Mortimer Au-

gustus Dunraven, standing next to the heavy portières which separated the deep alcove from the main room, and which were now drawn to make a pleasant *tête-à-tête* apartment of the smaller space. The rector was giving her an eloquent description of the needs of their parish, which needs might have been resolved into one word, and that the same used to express the needs of the girls' club.

It was quite easy for her to listen to the droning and deliberate speech of her companion, to sigh sympathetically at his tales of the distress which it was his wish to relieve, and to inspire his breast with hopes of checks for large amounts by her bewitching smiles, while at the same time she caught the main part of the conversation going on on the other side of the portière. She could not tell who was the other party taking part in the discourse, but all her interest and curiosity were on the alert as she heard her son-in-law say, apparently with deep emotion:

"But how can I give her up? I tell you I *love* her! And I'd marry her to-morrow."

"But we cannot do things in such a hurry, though for my part there is nothing I would like better," responded a voice.

"Surely her affections are not enlisted in favor of such a contemptible man as that——"

"Hush! he is here to-night, and might not be pleased to know in what estimation he is held."

"But, my dear Mrs. ——" Mrs. Islip was conscious of inclining her head to try and catch the name, which escaped her, while the rector thought she was showing unusual interest in his conversation. She was just about to complain of weariness and ask the rector to take her into that alcove to look for a seat, when her entertainers came up and insisted on escorting her to a table on a raised platform where the guests of the evening were to be supped.

"I tell you, I *love* her," kept sounding in Mrs. Islip's ears, and she longed to have the identity of that "her" established so that she might with more certainty know how to act. She watched the persons coming out of the alcove, but so many appeared when Mr. Grout did that she was afforded no clew to the solution of the mystery.

"You love her and you'd marry her to-morrow, indeed!" she repeated to herself as her eyes rested on her son-in-law. "Perhaps *you* would, but perhaps *I'll* have something to say about it!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A PICTURE OF THE ISLIP HOUSEHOLD.

THERE was a malady with which Mrs. Islip was frequently attacked that is not, in the author's humble opinion, to be found classified in any medical dictionary; neither has there yet been discovered a drug for inward or outward application which is able to quell its ravages. It is commonly known as the "party fever," and rages with the most irresistible destructiveness in the winter months.

When Mrs. Islip had an attack she was able to administer a panacea more easily than some ladies, because hers was the charmed name that gave the checks and notes of "Silas Islip & Co., Commission Brokers, Nassau Street," any value. Consequently, when her husband detected the first symptoms he usually drew a deep sigh, especially if he was in need of a little extra assistance (which, by the way, was a chronic condition with him) in his precarious business; but he rarely offered any remonstrance. Once he tried the ruse of complaining of feeling ill, and suggesting that terrifying (to some wives) act of making his will. This served to obtain for him a trained nurse and a trip to the Bermudas, but in his absence his wife gave the grandest ball of the season, an entertainment at which appeared counts, countesses, dukes, duchesses, all of the noblest extraction, and the President of the United States, while no one could estimate the number of possible future Presidents, together with senators, representatives, generals, lieutenants, judges, lawyers, doctors of medicine, divinity and philosophy. If any *untitled* persons were present their

names were discreetly omitted from the list which the morning papers gave of this magnificent affair. All these titled personages, let me repeat, appeared to grace this wonderful occasion, but in consequence Mr. Islip was obliged to disappear from Nassau street and all his favorite haunts.

"Silas, dear," his wife had said, as she patted him lightly on the cheek with her two forefingers, "you must give up your business for a while; my income goes farther when you are not trying to make money."

Mr. Islip never forgot the lesson he learned at that time, and his health was always excellent thereafter, however poorly his wife insisted he was looking when she herself was about to be seized with the malady indicated above.

Allusion has been made to the marriage and early death of Mrs. Islip's only daughter. The season of mourning decreed by the uncompromising goddess of fashion she had observed with superstitious exactness, though how she chafed at the interruption to her darling pastimes may be inferred from the fact that even when her somber dress prevented her from openly joining in festivities at friends' houses she would occupy obscure nooks and gaze with unutterable longings at scenes she could not otherwise enjoy.

But at length the time had passed—the exact number of days to the very minute and second that the highest authorities gave as due to the memory of a daughter she had enveloped herself in crepe, plain black, lavender and grey—and *now* she was able to *wear* what she pleased, to go *where* she pleased, and to *give* what she pleased. Her mind naturally turned to thoughts of a grand entertainment, and especially was this the case the morning after her presence at the club rooms, which has been described in the last chapter.

She felt that those young ladies needed points on the correct way of receiving and entertaining that she *would* like to give them, and that she *could* give them in no other way so well as by inviting them to a correctly managed affair. Not but what she realized there would be a difference between the entertainment she would give and that the young ladies invited her to. At the same time, there were important rules about the number of knives and forks about each plate, the changes in napkins, the right place for candelabra and the exact number of drops in the finger-bowls. In all of these important matters the young ladies had shown themselves deficient in knowledge concerning their right performance, and she would like to undertake to educate them. She depended on her son-in-law to invite congressional and judicial friends. As her maid was giving the last touches to her morning toilet she thought she would make out a list with him that very morning.

A commotion in the hall, arising from loud, angry tones in her son-in-law and his child's voices made her listen a moment, and she heard the father ask:

"What are you doing, Roundout?"

There was a pause, when he demanded the second time:

"What are you about, sir?" this time very sternly.

"I ain't doing nussin' 'cept to make me some paste for my kite," replied the child, looking up and speaking with deliberation, while using his father's best beaver as a paste-pot.

"I should say that was quite enough!" exclaimed Mr. Grout, seizing the hat in one hand and the boy in the other. "Let me teach you a lesson, you young vagabond, to let your father's best things alone!" he continued, shaking the boy until his grandmamma's pet curls stood in every direction.

"You san't teach me nuffin', you nasty old baby of a Papa Grout; leave me alone!" he shrieked. "You's hating (hurting) my arm! I'll tell Mummer Islip, and she'll set the dog on you! Give me my paste; I will have my paste!"

With unabated energy the child kept up his screaming and crying, while his attempts at injuring his father's shins with his infantile feet might have been amusing to one who had never heard nor felt any interest in the observance of the fifth commandment.

A rustle at the head of the stairs was quickly followed by the appearance, in an elaborate pink and blue morning costume, of Mrs. Islip.

"What is the matter with mamma's precious boy?" she cried, opening her arms and pillowing the angry boy's head upon her breast.

"Make Papa Grout give me my paste, Mummer Islip," he sobbed.

Mrs. Islip was a lady who prided herself on her calmness and serenity under all circumstances.

"Why, I wonder what Papa Grout can possibly want of poor little Roundout's paste," she murmured in her sweetest tone of voice.

The gentleman referred to had stepped out of the hall just before Mrs. Islip's appearance, but had returned in time to hear her last remark.

"The principal thing I should like of the rascal's paste is that it should be kept out of my new beaver hat! Where is his nurse?" he demanded.

"Why, my precious lamb, did you make paste in your papa's Sunday-go-to-meeting hat? Why, how very naughty!"

"Ess I did, Mummer Islip," whispered to her with both his chubby arms around her neck, "and I s'all make some

more there, too, the next chance I get, for he s'ook (shook) me awful!"

His reproof came in peals of laughter, interspersed with ardent embraces and kisses, while Mrs. Islip said:

"Oh, what a naughty boy! How shall we punish him?"

"Better give him a sugar plum and a trip to the carousal at the park!" exclaimed Mr. Grout, ironically. "I notice that is the usual way the boy is punished, until he is becoming so unbearable there will be no living in the house with him!"

"*I* isn't! *You* is!" shouted the defiant three-year-old, shaking his curly head at his father.

The boy had ventured away from his grandmother's arms when he made this bold speech, and stood pointing his chubby fist with outstretched five fingers like a veritable little imp.

"I'll teach you to talk like that to your father," replied Mr. Grout, suddenly putting out his hand, but the child was the quicker. He darted back to Mrs. Islip's arms, with the cry:

"Oh, save me, mummer!"

"There cannot anything or anybody hurt my darling while safe in my arms, can there, you beautiful dear!" exclaimed the grandmother, covering the boy with kisses and twisting his really beautiful hair around her slender fingers. "It does seem a trifle strange," she continued, musingly in the same sweet tone of voice, "that a son should need protection from his father. Not many parents could feel anything but pride at owning such a lovely boy."

"A wonderfully lovely boy, that, I should say!" returned Mr. Grout. "Any little street Arab would not go ahead of him in impudence nor in want of affection. You ought to have seen him try to kick me just now!"

This brought out another burst of approving laughter from Mrs. Islip, with renewed kisses, while she looked reprovingly at her darling and said:

"Oh, what a naughty boy! What shall we do with him?"

"Give him his owny-donty paste, mummer, and see what a nice kite he'll make!"

"Well, I guess we will have to try it," replied Mrs. Islip.

"Perhaps you think I will allow my child to trample over me in that way," rejoined Mr. Grout. "No, sir, you cannot have the paste."

"Can't I have it, mummer?" exclaimed the boy, beginning to whimper.

"Oh, I guess Papa Grout will give it to you!" returned Mrs. Islip, serenely. "You did not mean to injure his hat, did you, love?"

"Whether he meant it or not, he will not have the paste," returned Mr. Grout, glumly.

"'Ess I will!" replied the little fellow, commencing to roar lustily.

As he roared he jumped up and down, while his father replied to his importunities at the top of his lungs till the tumult was something appalling.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Islip, appearing at this juncture. "You made such a racket as I stood outside I summoned two policemen to be within call in case of any emergency."

"I should think you would have become accustomed to our son's method of disciplining his child by this time," exclaimed Mrs. Islip in the calm, satisfied tones of one who had been attending a highly edifying exhibition in which her own superior management had enabled everything to come to a satisfactory issue.

"Discipline him? I just want you to understand I am going to begin and discipline him if I have to break every bone in his body to do it! He is not going to talk to me the way he has this morning with impunity."

"I think myself the child needs training," suggested Mr. Islip, looking interrogatively at his wife as if for permission to express himself.

"Mummer Islip, she does train me," sobbed the boy, who was sitting on his grandmother's knee.

"And now she will have to let Papa Grout train you, eh?"

"No, no!" screamed the child, putting both arms tight around her neck.

"Come, do not let him get started again. Where is his nurse?" asked the pacific Mr. Islip.

"Silas, why need you concern yourself with matters that do not belong to your province to control? If I wanted the nurse to come for this boy I should send for her without any help from you!"

Silas was enough of a philosopher and a lawyer not to reply when his wife spoke like that. He knew it was because she was out of temper with her son-in-law. In fact, he had observed that each of them when angry with the other always spoke crossly to anybody else but very civilly and politely to the one against whom they felt the deepest rancor, so he contented himself with going to the window and whistling plaintively, "Bonnie Sweet Bessie, the Maid o' Dundee."

Mrs. Islip realized by the dark scowl on her son-in-law's brow and his glum answers when spoken to that she had carried matters as far as it was expedient, seeing she wished him to be good-natured enough to make out that list. She therefore called Roundout's nurse, and during the breakfast which followed applied herself to the task of

smoothing the disturbed gentleman's ruffled plumage. This proved a more difficult task than she had anticipated. All her pleasant tales were listened to with a cold, absent-minded air. After they left the table she said something about her check book which made her husband hasten upstairs for it and appear again with a celerity that was damaging to a healthy circulation, as he said:

"Imogen, star of my life, it is five thousand you owe me this time," for Mr. Islip had a facetious way of calling what he wanted his wife to give him an indebtedness.

Even this usually interesting preliminary did not start the cloud from Mr. Grout's brow nor cause him to linger in the society of his fair mother-in-law. He was in the hall putting on his hat and coat when Mrs. Islip said to her husband:

"Now, Silas, why can you not take pattern from our dear son-in-law in not wanting anything? You see, he is going off perfectly satisfied, and *you* want a check for five thousand."

"Perfectly satisfied!" ejaculated the gloomy ex-member of Congress, returning and thereby falling into the snare laid for him by his bland, wily connection by marriage.

"Perfectly satisfied!" Mr. Grout mumbled something about all the evil spirits in the nether regions being satisfied, but that *he* was *not* by any manner of means!

Mrs. Islip laughed one of her silvery, complimentary laughs.

"Not satisfied? Why, how strangely you talk, Son-in-law Grout! What is necessary to complete your happiness? Nothing in the money line, I hope, for then I shall be unable to hold you up as a model for my husband to follow!"

But Mr. Grout was certain that there was a partial alleviation for his woes in that very direction. The truth was,

he had made up his mind to strike for a little over three thousand dollars in order to give Miss Mettle the sum she borrowed from the rector, with the proviso that she have nothing more to do with the church dignitary, but name an early day when she would consent to be Mrs. K. Roundout Grout number two. He knew, however, that his fair mother-in-law would oppose such a plan with all her might, for, added to the usual dislike of a first wife's relations to a second marriage, was her love for her grandchild and her fear that he might be taken from her at the instigation of a second wife.

"But, Imogen," her husband had expostulated, not sharing his wife's admiration for the boy, "it would relieve you of a great deal of care and trouble. I should not think you would mind. Moreover, very few women but would be glad to have you keep the lad," continued Mr. Islip, feeling that if it were impossible to get rid of the two ills he would like to see the greater evil removed.

"Silas!" exclaimed her ladyship with unusual warmth, "don't you believe it! There are very few women but would *insist* on having the lad, if for nothing else in order to have something to torment!" In which judgment the reader can see reflected the lady's own proclivities.

Mr. K. Roundout Grout felt certain that he knew why his mother-in-law was so unusually amiable, hence he determined before he would consent to use his inestimably precious influence in inviting the guests that only he had access to she would give him the sum he wanted.

"Imogen," said Mr. Islip, breaking into the discussion between his wife and son-in-law, "Imogen, fairest one, and dearest, had you not just as soon make out my check before you decide this other matter?" and Mr. Islip threw as much pathos into his voice as he could, while his countenance was overspread by an expression of such sorrow-

ful resignation that an unprejudiced beholder might have mistaken him for a man returning from the funeral service over the grave of his wife.

Mrs. Islip stopped a moment, wrote a check, tore it out of her book and handed it to her sad-faced liege.

"But Imogen, my life's bright star, this check is only for five hundred dollars! I said five thousand, and you surely do not mean to treat your own best beloved in so illiberal a manner. Why, that would be giving that fellow the most," and Mr. Islip thrust his thumb out toward his son-in-law with a contemptuous movement.

"But I have not given 'that fellow' anything yet!" returned Mrs. Islip, "and how do you know I will?"

"From past sad experience," returned Mr. Islip. "Now, just put another cipher after these two," he said, holding the check of five hundred before her. "That's a beautiful dear—just one more cipher."

"I can see very plainly what you two men want," returned Mrs. Islip. "You want to beggar me completely! How many incomes could stand the strain of giving out eight thousand five hundred dollars at once, and that just before the outlay absolutely necessary to keeping up the position in society that belongs to me?" being the way Mrs. Islip was wont to refer to her party-loving propensity.

Her husband's only response was a melancholy groan, while he buried his face in his hands.

"Well, Silas, I don't see what there is for *you* to groan at. I should think *I* was the one to do the groaning. You ought to have married a woman without a cent in the world, who would have pestered the life out of you for thousands and thousands of dollars besides her board and clothes. If I were a Theosophist I would prophesy that to be your condition in your next state, and I guess *then* your groans might rend the air to some purpose! But

what I would like to know," she continued, changing her subject by the occurrence of a sudden thought, "is this: How is the patent suit litigation coming on?"

The two men did not seem anxious to respond, but stood eyeing each other doggedly, until at length Mr. Islip said, hesitatingly:

"Well, Imogen, it is coming on after a fashion."

"After a fashion," repeated Mrs. Islip, impatiently, "well, what kind of a fashion?"

"Slow, Imogen, d—— slow, if you must have it! The processes of law can never be said to resemble the motions of a Chicago flyer, as you very well know. But even their snail-like progress may be interfered with, if a sufficiently great obstacle appears in their way." And here Mr. Islip directed his glance at his son-in-law in a manner not to be mistaken, and which caused that individual to say, after a few strong ejaculations:

"I presume you mean me, but I would like to know how I could help it? I was always sent for either too early in the morning or else when I had some other engagement. I am ready to go when they consult my convenience."

"Your convenience, Son-in-law Grout!" said Mrs. Islip. "How long since you imagined the law could dance attendance on your convenience? Ha, ha, ha! The airs you have given yourself since you were a member of Congress have made me think possibly you had mistaken yourself and had your identity mixed up with that Oriental Cham we read about, who daily proclaimed by sound of trumpet to the kings in the four corners of the earth that they, having dutifully awaited the close of *his* dinner, might with his royal license go to their own. You will graciously permit the law to summon you when not occupied with your august slumbers nor your still more important diversions. Now, I suppose you are anxious to

have this money, this thirty-five hundred, to settle contempt of court processes?"

"Imogen, that is a good one!" exclaimed her husband, rapturously imprinting a kiss on her forehead. "You are the cleverest woman I know! I do not understand why you are not on the bench as chief justice. But I'll be sure and vote for you next election day if you'll just put on this extra cipher!"

"Silas, you must first tell me what you are intending to do with this money," replied his wife.

Mr. Islip evaded this request as long as he could, but when he was certain that his wife would not yield he confided to her in a whisper that Rector Dunraven had promised to invest the sum for him in a most magnificent scheme where it was going to bring in thirty or forty per cent. interest.

"Well, Silas, if this scheme proves to be worth anything it will be the first time in your history that you have been successful. But, all the same, I will be ready to add to this sum on the payment of your first dividends. I would not care how many thousand I had invested at thirty per cent."

"There, Imogen, I knew you would be sorry for having spoken so sharply to your best and only beloved. I have the making of a fortune in me somewhere, I know."

"I hope you will soon discover the locality of such a desirable trait, for as yet you have only displayed the ability to lose. However, we must not forget there is no lane so long but at last there comes a turning," replied Mrs. Islip.

Her husband had reached the door with his check in his hand when he stopped and said:

"There, Imogen, I forgot; I promised Dunraven I'd mention to you the needs of our parish."

"You might have saved yourself the trouble," returned his wife, "for the gentleman did that himself, and I mean to send him a ten-dollar bill or so."

After the departure of Mr. Islip there was a long and spirited debate over the amount Mrs. Islip was asked to give her son-in-law. Not until she learned the three thousand was to be used benevolently did she feel like yielding. Then she said to herself: "That means he wants to give it to the girls' club, and I will let him fill out the blank for the name thereon, which, when it returns, will solve the mystery of the person he 'loves and would marry to-morrow.'" After this matter was settled then came the making out of the list for the impending grand party, ball, or rout, or whatever you might feel like calling it.

CHAPTER XV.

REVEREND MORTIMER AUGUSTUS DUNRAVEN.

THERE was another person beside Mrs. Islip who found food for reflection from the events which transpired and the people interviewed during the last evening of Miss Denny's week. That person was the Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven. He had not only gained some very good points concerning the character of his wealthiest lady parishioner, Mrs. Islip, which might have been found entered epigrammatically in his notebook in Latin opposite that lady's name as follows:

"A dove in appearance but not in practice. Of which fish in the sea can you say, 'That is mine'? None, by Jove! unless you catch them, which I mean to do."

He had also been able to hold just the attitude toward Miss Nevins and Miss Mettle to augment their interest in him and add new names to the list of his admirers.

The following morning the rector lay comfortably dozing in his luxurious bed, which, we must tell our readers in an aside, was supposed to be a carved altar by his domestics, it being in reality a folding-bed. He wished to have the credit of great austerity in his manner of life, so his room was furnished with an iron bedstead, on which was a thin, hard mattress. Even this scanty protection he was careful to have removed during Lent, as he then wished to be thought to lie on the hard strips of iron supporting the bed. A servant had instructions to call him at an early hour, ostensibly for the purpose of holy matins, but he also

made it one of his occupations at that hour to transform his luxurious couch into an altar and by an extremely simple process to give his hard iron bed the look of having been used.

The Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven was a firm believer in the use of all the externals to assist in giving an air of sanctity to his life, especially when their use might be made to interfere so little with his actual comfort. His table was another point where he strove to impress this same idea on his servants, and through them on the world at large. For his breakfast and tea he only allowed porridge to be prepared; for his dinner, meat, one vegetable and bread. But there are restaurants in convenient, out-of-the-way places in New York which helped him amazingly in lightening the rigors of such a diet. Two waiters in this restaurant were overheard discussing the capacities of their various customers, and one called Jim said:

"I'd be willing to wager this 'ere gold chain of mine against your'n" (which anybody could see with half an eye was pewter) "that no one in this establishment has a gent to wait on as can eat so much or such a queer lot of stuff as a thin, measly, yellow-faced priest as allers comes to my table. He do beat everything in that line I ever see!"

"Well, I've a man as can go through five courses, and good big uns, too, inside ten minutes, for many's the meal as I've timed him," returned Jim's companion, setting down a tumbler which he had been polishing with extra care.

"Oh, my man don't eat in courses!" replied Jim. "He's as apt as not to begin with the dessert! Now, yesterday he asked for rice pudding first, then for apple dumpling, then for mince pie, then for charlotte russe, then for two plates of ice cream, and he finished off with nuts, raisins and fruits. If it's religion as enables him to go without

meat and taters I've a great notion to get it on account of the saving 'twould be!"

"A heap of saving, you donkey, if you had to pay for all them sweets instead!"

"Why, sure enough; I never thought of that!"

But, to return to the young Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven and his reflections. He had heard the knock of his faithful housekeeper and her "*Pax vobiscum!*" which accompanied by the rustle of her dress, told that she had risen from the prostration she was wont to make when she, all unworthy, had been so audacious as to break the slumbers of the saintly man she was proud to call her master.

He had replied "*Et vobiscum!*" but had made no further sign of returning consciousness. The truth was, he was plunged in deep reflection. He was finding himself surrounded with difficulties of various kinds. Lending that three thousand dollars, for one thing, had resulted in a commotion that was by no means settled by the collection Mr. Bowman, with such chivalrous intentions, had taken up to relieve the temporary embarrassment of the Mission in the person of Mrs. Thatcher. The ire of Mr. Griffin had been roused by the unexpected demand made on his pocket-book, and he was heard to mutter and mumble something about his "making it hot for those fellows." Muttering and mumbling that resembled the premonitory symptoms of life in a volcano.

No attention had been paid to these portentous signs, for Mr. Griffin was always to be found in the ranks of the "opposition," which meant that he was not on either one side or the other of a debatable case, but violently opposed to both. He had stormed with a violence that would have proven disastrous to the shipping on the Atlantic coast, after the door closed on Mrs. Thatcher, at the idea of Mr.

Elijah Bowman extracting that contribution from him. Consequently, he was trying to even up matters, and, as he was trustee of the fund, the interest from which was left to support the Mission, he was using his influence to suspend further disbursements from that quarter until—the legal expression he meant to use was: “Suitable examination could be made that said monies were used in accordance with testator’s last will and testament,” but Mr. Griffin’s more private and familiar phraseology was, “Until he made those fellows squirm.”

Mr. Griffin could not have selected a more unfortunate time for the rector’s plans to operate on his brethren in the manner designated above, because it had cost a great deal to introduce the new order of ceremonial and build the addition to be used as confessional corridor, besides a still larger enterprise he had on hand. He had depended on the Mission not only to run itself, but to help keep other branches of the church work going.

“There!” burst out the rector in the midst of his solemn thoughts, “I must not forget I am to have pasted up the notices of the increase of the confessional fee to five dollars. I should like to ask that Miss Nevins twenty. She takes up so much of my time telling her doubts, which might all be resolved into one stupendous doubt as to whether she was going to get a husband. If it would not be so detrimental to my interests in other matters I should like nothing better than to resolve all her doubts and place her feet on the solid foundation of cold, hard fact in regard to one source of great uncertainty with her, namely, whether she is going to get *me* or not. But no, I must deny myself the satisfaction such a straightforward course would give me, for the good of the cause.”

And the Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven heaved a lugubrious sigh and turned himself over in bed as though

the mental view of himself in such an attitude of virtuous self-forgetfulness was extremely oppressive.

At this juncture he heard a rustling without his door which made him start in great surprise and look at his watch. It was an hour later than usual. He began a monotonous droning which was to convey to his housekeeper the intelligence that his devotions were not yet finished. Then there was the difficult task of converting his bed into an altar. This could not be done without certain thumpings and movings which he preferred to have take place with his housekeeper at a little further distance, so he called through the door:

“Johannah! Johannah! if you would not mind, I wish you would yourself go around to the news stand on the next street and get my morning paper. I want it a little earlier this morning.”

“Most gladly, master,” replied a low, gentle voice, and after the rustling of the woman’s dress had died away the reverend gentleman proceeded to finish the more noisy part of the arrangements of his room. He was so desirous of hastening that he did not hear several timid little knocks. But, thinking the time would be limited for him to accomplish what he wanted to, he rattled around with less caution than usual. At the final bang, however, in the transformation process there came a scream, and the voice that had just spoken so gently called with trembling emotion:

“Oh, master! Good master! I know you have fallen with weakness from your protracted heavenly communings. If you can only crawl to the door and open it so that I can bring you refreshment! I have been anxious about you for a long time.”

The rector, after mentally consigning his housekeeper to various remote quarters of the globe, concluded she had

suggested about as wise a course of conduct as any for him to pursue, so he groaned pathetically and said:

"Yes, Johannah, perhaps I *do* need refreshment. I will get the door open as soon as I can."

There were several things still out of place, which he stepped lightly around and arranged, and finally when with apparent superhuman effort he struggled to open the door, Johannah's tears fell like rain at the sight of his pale, sallow face and prostrate figure. She brought cushions for his head and crossed herself every time her unworthy hands touched the body of the man she esteemed so sacred, so holy, so immeasurably the superior of the rest of mankind.

"It was so fortunate that I came back to learn the name of the paper," she murmured to herself as she adjusted the shade at the window that the light might not injure her master's eyes. That individual lay apparently with his eyes closed, though in reality he had one open, with which he was regarding Johannah. The woman was a constant pleasure to him as a study. She was fine-looking, with a tall, shapely figure and a well-proportioned head. She had beautiful hair, very thick and long and of a rich chestnut color, which she parted in the middle of a low forehead and brought down in a very unbecoming manner over her ears, while her large, melancholy, brown eyes looked out from under her heavy brows with a wistful sadness.

A depressingly doleful atmosphere surrounded this good woman, and a close observer might have detected set lines about her mouth and chin which seemed to say, "*I will be melancholy, and no one shall keep me from it.*" When she first came to live with the rector she was in the kitchen, and prepared his meals, but she burned so many of the dishes while she was engaged in her devotions that he de-

cided to remove her from that position. She was altogether too valuable a person to lose from his household, however, so he gave her general charge.

"We should be resigned to all providential dispensations, Johannah," said the rector, in a weak voice, while he kept his one eye open to see what effect his words would have. He enjoyed working on her sensibilities.

"Oh, yes indeed, master, that we should. I know I'm very wicked, because I *can't* be resigned. And, then, to think that such a worthless worm as I, who am not fit to live, should dare *not* to be resigned. Oh, it is dreadful to think of! I often wonder God does not strike me dead. But I guess He thinks I'm not fit to be touched, even with one of His arrows."

"Perhaps it would help you to be resigned to think how much worse things might be, Johannah. I might be taken away."

"Oh, master," sobbed the woman on her knees and wringing her hands before him, "you don't think He will! You don't think God will take from this wicked world one who is trying so hard to make things better? If I could only persuade Him to take me instead! But what presumption to think He'd listen to anything such a sinner as I might suggest! But you ask Him! Plead with Him! He always listens to the prayers of saints."

"There's no immediate danger of such a catastrophe," returned the rector with the air of a man satisfied with the tempest he had raised. "I am feeling better now, and shall doubtless feel still more refreshed after I have had some breakfast."

"A thousand pardons, master," and Johannah rose from her knees and moved toward the door. Before turning the knob, however, she hesitated.

"But, master——" she began.

"But what, Johannah?" returned the rector.

"I did not know whether you'd forgotten it's St. Beelzebub's day."

"True; and a fast day. I am glad to be reminded, Johannah," while he said to himself, "Confound the woman! She has too good a memory for such things. I wish she was equally careful about the dusting, cleaning the brass work and leaving my holy books open, so that callers might be impressed with my erudition." He continued aloud:

"Well, Johannah, then I'll go and see some poor people."

"First let me bring you a cup of hot water and a wafer, master; I am sure you are not able to endure your great labors without a little nourishment."

"Thanks, Johannah," returned the arch-hypocrite, who had mentally decided to get as far toward his poor people as the above-mentioned out-of-the-way café, and no further. "I shall not be away long, because I have an appointment with a gentleman who will be here at ten. If he comes in before I return give him 'The Lives of the Most Holy Fathers at Rome' to read," and both master and serving-woman went through various genuflexions and crossings for having mentioned such holy men.

Promptly at the hour mentioned Johannah answered the bell and saw standing before her a man with keen black eyes and long, oily black hair. He carried a portfolio under his arm and was whistling while he beat a gentle refrain with his cane.

"H'm! Is Mr. Dunraven in?" he asked in a dashing, offhand manner.

"If you mean 'his reverence the holy rector of the chapel of the——'"

"Mercy on us, woman! Life is too short to spend so much time on the handle to a man's name. Is Dunraven in? That's the question."

"His reverence, the holy rector, is *not* in," replied Johannah, dislike of the most virulent type displaying itself and making her rattle the doorknob under the desire of closing the door in the face of her bold interrogator.

"Not in!" exclaimed the man, pulling out his watch. "Why, it's just the hour he told me to come! I wonder what he thinks my time is worth that I can leave my office and come up here for nothing. By Jove! but he shall pay me well for this!"

He took one step toward the street before Johannah could overcome her repugnance to him sufficiently to say:

"I think that his reverence the holy rector, my gracious master, was expecting you. At least, he said a *gentleman*" (with an inflection which was intended to convey the impression that as nothing of that variety had presented itself she was not to blame for not recognizing him) "would be here at ten. In case he was not in, he said you were to wait and be graciously permitted to look at this holy volume."

"Don't disturb any of your *holy* volumes for me, but just stir yourself, and get me an *unholy* morning newspaper. I find I left mine in the car coming up. Yes, certainly, I will graciously permit you to leave the room without kissing my hand or my great toe."

Johannah was exceedingly averse to leaving the man alone, but she was not on good terms with the kitchen-maid, and the papers were below, so there was no other way.

The rectory was a very pretty rough gray-stone building, with an English basement. The dining-room and a diminutive reception-room were on the ground floor. On the next was a large, comfortable apartment, half parlor, half sitting-room, with the rector's bedroom opening ostentatiously into it. His study and a guest chamber were on

the floor above, and the rooms occupied by Johannah and the kitchenmaid above that.

"To think of such a man's being left alone in my master's room!" said Johannah to herself, as with trembling haste she looked for the papers. "I am bad enough, heaven knows, but there is something about him that I think—it appears to me—I hope I do not wrong him in the thought—is as bad if not a trifle worse than I. At least, I never before knew a *good* man to look so *bad*—to have such evil black eyes, and a smile so much like a leer, and curly hair that hung round like so many greasy snakes. Where are those papers?"

At length the good woman found what she was looking for, and made her way with great expedition to where she left the stranger sitting. Johannah's feet were always clad indoors in some kind of felt slipper, so that she moved around very noiselessly. She found the room empty, but the man's hat and portfolio told her that their owner had not gone far. She looked into the next room, and there before her master's holy altar was the unclean, dastardly stranger. Johannah was not a strong woman physically, and the sight gave her a nervous shock. She turned deadly pale and in all probability would have fainted had not the man just then put out his hand and given the object of veneration a good shake. That roused her and seemed to give her superhuman energy, for quick as a flash she seized the man by the collar of his coat, and, although he was large and heavy, he was in the adjoining room with incredible swiftness.

"Who the devil are you, anyway?" he asked fiercely, as he readjusted his coat, which showed a tendency to envelop his head as well as his body.

Johannah's only reply was to lock the doors into the bedroom and seat herself on the opposite side of the

apartment from the irate man, her hands folded and her large, dark eyes fixed intently on him.

"You need not sit there looking like an aggrieved mummy, for I'll have the law on you. I'll have you arrested for assault, you big-eyed spook. Perhaps you think you can take an honest citizen and dash him round by the collar, and not hear anything from it."

"Honest?" with a rising inflection, came from Johannah's tightly closed lips, while her upright body and steady gaze confronted her adversary.

"Yes, honest; I say honest, and you can't say dishonest!" screamed the man, and in his rage he got up and stepped around with far from military precision. "And that's another point which I can bring against you, and I'll make a note of it." Taking out his book, he wrote, spelling aloud, "C-a-l-u-m-n-y. But, then, you've probably got a large bank account," he said, trying the jocular vein. "You won't mind paying a few thousand dollars for the satisfaction you derive from maligning a person, or even a month or two's residence in a penitentiary would not seem too much of an outlay."

The man continued his vituperations, his threats and his epithets, endeavoring to extort some response from the straight-backed figure before him, but Johannah showed no signs of hearing him. The sight of her sitting there calm and unmoved had anything but a soothing effect on the irate gentleman of the law, and there is no telling to what lengths his anger might have gone had not the click of the rector's key served to warn him that it was the best policy to smother his rage, for the time at least, in order not to injure his business relations with his reverence the gracious rector of the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISS HOPPER'S DISSATISFACTION.

"MRS. WINN, I have come down to have a little private conversation with you," Miss Hopper said one morning in the middle of her week, which was the one following Miss Denny's. I detected the premonitory symptoms of a storm in the ominous crackle of Miss Hopper's voice, which warned me that she was in a state of mind bordering on "spontaneous combustion!"

"I am of a long-suffering, easily imposed upon, thoroughly meek disposition." (If my readers will just imagine themselves addressed in the above manner by a little red-topped turkey cock whose feathers were bristling with partly suppressed rage, they will have an inkling as to my feelings when I looked at Miss Hopper growing redder and redder, her always protruding blue eyes increasing in size, though not in color, her voice rising, and crackling with each rise.) "But though I am all that there is a limit to my forbearance, and I feel as though I reached that limit last evening. The first evening I came to these rooms there were only fifteen girls here to receive the valuable instruction in poetry and art that I had to give them, the next evening there were seven and last night, as you know, there was not one."

"Except Lena Deckenbachschmitt," I murmured.

"I'll have no exceptions made, Mrs. Winn, let me tell you," replied Miss Hopper, stamping her foot. "Do you think such a stupid, who went to sleep and snored, yes, ac-

tually snored in the midst of my fervid (and my professor says matchless) rendering of the love scene in "Lalla Rookh," is fit to be reckoned as half a one even? Never! Only when you are counting up donkeys, then she can stand for a dozen. Now, what I am coming at is this, Mrs. Winn, the girls are not to be kept away on *my* nights or on Ray Mettle's nights and then induced to turn out in full force on Grace Denny's evenings. Do you understand?" and Miss Hopper's little fat forefinger, pointing menacingly at me, shook perceptibly.

"Miss Hopper, my influence with the girls has been always exerted in favor of a regular attendance. I never have made more calls than I have the past few days, when I have urged the members of the club to be present. But they have replied 'they didn't think po'try wuz for the likes o' them;' and they thought more of hearts than all the arts you could teach them, especially the way to Jim's or Joe's or Mick's or Pat's heart, which they aver is more surely reached by pie or tart than any other."

"You need not feel yourself called upon to rehearse their impudence to me, Mrs. Winn," returned Miss Hopper, strutting about in the attempt to impress her importance as well as to give vent to her agitation. "What I want you to thoroughly understand is the fact that I've *got* to have an audience and if you cannot get it for me I shall find some one who can. You have plenty on hand for Grace Denny, and I shall see that there is some one here who has my interest at heart as you seem to have hers."

I soon found it was a waste of breath to reiterate the facts, which were as I have already stated. There was no partiality on my side for either one of my three fair philanthropic employers and no abatement of my efforts to secure as large an attendance for one as for the other. The only reply I received to such assertions was:

"Then why are there not as many out on my evenings?"

"Perhaps the girls are not interested in the subjects you take up," I suggested.

"But they *should* be," she insisted. "They need elevating. Do you pretend to deny that?" (I thought to myself, "They are not the *only* ones who need it.") "Do you suppose if I was in their place and needed elevating as much as they do that I'd be so wanting in sense?" she continued.

"We cannot any of us tell what we would do under other circumstances," I replied, little dreaming of the mine of latent fury the harmless remark was to explode.

"That's a falsehood! a black, monstrous untruth! I know exactly what I should be under any and every circumstance. Who are you who dare to insinuate that I don't know? You don't know your place, Mrs. Winn. You need to realize that salaried persons are scarcely above servants and do you suppose I'd allow any servant to say to me that I could not tell what I'd do under other circumstances?" She uttered a loud, scornful laugh, and I held my peace and my tongue.

I hoped this occasion might exemplify the truth of the Wise Man's saying: "Who so keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." But, alas, my silence did not seem to have that effect in this instance. Perhaps she had the gift of mind-reading; if so, she would not have been pleased to have discovered how devoutly I sympathized with anybody who had to occupy the position of servant in a household managed by such a concentrated and active fury. At all events she broke forth in a minute or two with fresh violence.

"Perhaps you think under more favorable circumstances you might have become a lady! But I tell you, you couldn't! You are too independent! too meddlesome! and altogether too shamelessly presumptuous! I never had a

person look at me in the way you do. You look at me as if I were a little girl and needed correcting, instead of the daughter of the man who once owned half of Manhattan Island (whatever his property may be at present), and your superior in every respect. I won't stand it!" and she stamped her foot with great energy. "Here I am working hard for the interests of this club and what do I get for it? Sneers from Ray Mettle and Grace Denny and contempt from an inferior! You have got to change your ways, Mrs. Winn, or I won't answer for the consequences."

I stepped to the door to answer a knock just at this juncture and there stood Agnes. I should have whispered, "Go away and come back in a few minutes," but Miss Hopper followed me too closely.

"Come right in," she said to Agnes. "You find it easy enough to get round here to see Mrs. Winn. But I have not seen you one evening this week."

"Yes and I am so sorry I have to miss your interesting and instructive evenings, Miss Hopper," Agnes replied sweetly.

"I should prefer to have your sorrow expressed in some other way than words," replied Miss Hopper stiffly. "Can you be out this evening?"

Beautiful blushes appeared on Agnes's cheeks as she replied:

"No, Miss Hopper, I shall have to work for a number of weeks in the evening, but it is unavoidable. I want to come, and as soon as the court closes I shall surely avail myself of the great privileges you place before girls."

"It must be a peculiar kind of court which sits in the evening!" Miss Hopper rejoined with a sneer.

"The court sits in the daytime but I have to do my duties as bookkeeper in the evening to make up for being absent to attend to my father's law-suit."

It was all I could do to keep from throwing my arms around the dear girl, she looked so distressed, so anxious to mollify and please, but not knowing exactly how. Everything she said seemed to produce the opposite effect from what she intended.

Miss Hopper moved around smoothing one little fat hand with the other little fat hand, or else both little fat hands smoothing her little fat body. At length she said:

"I think, Mrs. Winn, this is the young lady who owes her place to us?"

I stared at Miss Hopper and replied:

"Not that I know of. To what do you refer?"

"I refer to the assistance she received in the influence which was used to persuade her employer to take her back, and this is the way she rewards us."

I had had so much experience in the cool presumption of these young ladies (to use the mildest of terms) that I ought not to have been surprised at anything. But I must say the effrontery of claiming Mrs. Conrad's noble kindness startled me and I replied with warmth:

"I regret exceedingly to be obliged to say this before Miss Dearborn, and I would not do so did I not know she was the most forgiving, magnanimous creature in the world, but the influence of both the young ladies to whom I appealed at that unhappy time was flatly refused."

"Oh, well, somebody helped you. I heard at the time who it was, and they would not have done so had they not thought you were connected with us and therefore worthy of consideration."

It was useless to reply to such stupendous conceit and arrogance, for a person with these attributes always possesses at the same time an epidermis so thick that nothing but shafts of ridicule prepared on the anvil of personal malice can penetrate or produce any effect. Those were

weapons I prayed heaven to keep me free from, so I only said:

"I think if any one ought to talk about rewards it is Miss Dearborn, who risked her life to put out the flames in Miss Mettle's dress and received in consequence injuries which were so painful."

"Oh, now, dear Mrs. Winn, don't say anything about such a little trifle. I was glad to have the opportunity of serving."

"That is a very becoming spirit for one in your position to manifest!" exclaimed Miss Hopper patronizingly, "and when your legal matters are arranged," with a mocking shrug of her shoulders, "you may serve me. Remember, Mrs. Winn, there must be a room full this evening."

She said this as she was hastening into the hall. In a minute she returned.

"Mrs. Winn, have you seen Mr. Grassey? I see his tandem in the street below and I was sure I saw the top of his head while turning one of the corners of the stairs."

I replied that I had not seen him and that he had not been in the rooms, but I did not think it necessary to reveal his hiding-place, which he had confided to me not long previous with the solemn promise on my part that I would keep his secret.

In spite of my words Miss Hopper came in and shook all the portières and peered into the alcove and opened the closet doors and looked into my bedroom.

"Oh, Miss Hopper," I cried when I heard by her footsteps that she had proceeded halfway down the stairs. My tone was so cheerful and animated that I suppose she thought I had some precious bit of gossip to offer. She came running back, saying:

"What is it, Mrs. Winn?"

"You forgot to look in the ice-chest," I replied.

Miss Hopper's disappointment was discernible in the manner of her closing the door.

At length I could be alone with my darling. What a delight! And how fast our tongues flew! She had so much to tell me about the law-suit, and one important part of her errand to me that day was to ask if I would be willing to appear to testify to her good character, not this week but next. She would tell me the day. Testify? Wouldn't I gladly testify? The only trouble would be to stop me when I got started on such a delightful subject.

"Darling," I said, "however much I may think it, I suppose I must not say you are an angel, beautiful as the light, scattering blessings in the same way, just from utter inability to do otherwise."

"Oh, you dear, dear friend! I am not worthy of your good opinion. You look at me through a rosy medium, I fear," and Agnes threw her arm caressingly around me.

"Ahem!" came from the partly open door where some one stood scuffling his feet. "Mrs.—er—er—Winn, Mrs. Winn!" I recognized the voice and going to the door I said:

"Is that you, Mr. Grassey? Miss Hopper was just looking for you."

"Oh, yes, I know it. See this tear in my coat! James put those ash barrels a little nearer together than he has put them before and this tail caught. But that's better than my being caught by Miss Hopper, eh, Mrs. Winn?" Seeing a reproving look on my face he continued: "Oh, but you would say so if you had been caught before and knew how many hours you had had to spend going around to call on her friends, to all of whom she intimated that she was granting a long and ardent desire on my part to meet them, a desire I was wholly unconscious of possessing, while I was

positively certain by the time she got through with me of an inextinguishable longing to see her and hers in—in—well, I won't mention just where, for fear you might not like it, Mrs. Winn."

There was no use in trying to keep Mr. Grassey in the hall. He was so determined to enter that in spite of my efforts to prevent him he carried out his purpose. I wondered at this, for hitherto it had been enough for him to be in an adjoining room to the object of his love and admiration. He had avoided meeting her face to face. It was as though the ecstasy of actually addressing her would be greater than he could bear. But now he fairly pushed himself into her presence and there they stood. I did not want to do it but there seemed no other way.

"Miss Dearborn, this is Mr. Grassey," I said reluctantly.

To my amazement Agnes drew herself up haughtily and said:

"Mrs. Winn, I don't blame you at all, but I regret exceedingly to be introduced to a man who is capable of treating a poor defenseless woman in the inhuman manner in which I saw this man treat a beggar the other evening."

Mr. Grassey turned ghastly pale and one hand clutched nervously the other:

"Oh, but you know I did not strike her," he replied, while it seemed to require an effort for him to keep his teeth from chattering.

"So much the worse—to torment the poor creature by a needless fright," replied Agnes, construing Mr. Grassey's agitation into an acknowledgment of guilt, and walking away toward the window to emphasize still further her disapproval.

From the bottom of my motherly heart I pitied Mr. Grassey, for he showed that he was suffering keenly, but on the other hand I did not want to rouse Agnes's interest in

him. I have the adorable Thackeray's word for it that every woman who is worth a pin is a matchmaker in her heart, and therefore I am not ashamed to own I looked into the future, and the sight of the two even now standing before me possibly united in the closest of bonds was very repugnant to my ideas of the fitness of things. He had given abundant proof that he was in dead earnest, even though it was for the first time in his life, and I knew that a man in that frame of mind is not the man to be trifled with.

Mr. Grassey stood there showing his agitation by first running his hand through his straw-colored hair and then banging his beaver against his knee.

"If it hadn't been—if it hadn't been—er—er—I would not have done it! eh, Mrs. Winn? Would I now? You know me, Mrs. Winn. Don't you now, though? You know it ain't my nature to be cruel. James knows it. He says I'm too kind by half to everybody. Oh, tell her, Mrs. Winn. Don't let her go off thinking so meanly of me."

This last was uttered in the most imploring tones as Agnes made ready to depart.

"Nothing that she could *say*, Mr. Grassey, would remove the impression of what I *saw*," replied Agnes loftily, and she shut the door impatiently behind her.

"Mrs. Winn, I wish you'd take something and kill me!" exclaimed Mr. Grassey after a few minutes of silence, during which time he had buried his face in his hands and something that sounded very much like a sob might have been heard.

"Oh, nonsense, Mr. Grassey, be a man and make up your mind never to care for any one in a serious way,—I mean who does not care for you."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Winn," exclaimed the poor fellow piteously, "my mind seemed to be made up for me by a power

outside myself, and so firmly that nothing I can do will *unmake* it. I didn't set out to fall in love with her, indeed, Mrs. Winn, upon my honor I did not;" this asseveration was prompted by a smile on my part. "The first thing I knew I was all of a heap before her. And now I should be happy to have her wipe her feet on me, but she won't even do that. Oh, Mrs. Winn, do you suppose there was ever such an unhappy person in the world?"

I made no reply to this, as I had gone into my room and was bustling around to get on my things; for I wished to make more calls than usual. But my attention was brought back to Mr. Grassey by hearing him bring his hand down on his knee and exclaim: "By Jove, why didn't I think of that? The principal thing I wanted to see her for, was to warn her, and then when I had the chance I forgot all about it!"

"Forgot all about what, Mr. Grassey?" I asked, appearing at the door of my room.

"Telling Miss Dearborn about those creatures who are hounding her about in the evening."

"She probably knows," I replied, thinking that Mr. Grassey wanted to make any possible excuse for another meeting, and wishing to discourage him.

"She showed that she did not, Mrs. Winn, by the way she spoke of my treatment of the woman she dignified by the name of beggar-woman, but who is, in reality, a she-devil, determined for some reason or other to entrap Miss Dearborn and that very speedily, too. Every evening since that one I told you about and to which she referred so cruelly—oh, Mrs. Winn, shall I ever recover from the shock of——"

"But what has happened every evening since?" I replied, my impatience rendering me an ungracious listener to poor Mr. Grassey's woes.

"Every evening that same old hag has appeared when Miss Dearborn has come out of her office, and if the miserable being had not been held in check by seeing me, she would have tried some of her dodges, I am sure."

"Why in the name of all that is sensible could you not have mentioned this when she was accusing you of cruelty?"

"Why couldn't I? Why couldn't I?" exclaimed Mr. Grassey, wringing his hands and looking the picture of despair; "but, Mrs. Winn, when a man is drowning he never thinks of being sensible. And I tell you what it is, Mrs. Winn, there was the rushing as of water in my ears and a blackness as of death before my eyes when she accused me. I could not collect my thoughts. Now what can be done?"

"Well, Mr. Grassey, I cannot think of anything better just at present but for you to keep a sharp lookout until I can get a chance to have a long, serious talk with Miss Dearborn."

"God bless you, Mrs. Winn!" cried Mr. Grassey, fervently pressing my hand. "That's the best fortune that could befall me just at present to be able to do something for her. Perhaps some time she won't think me cruel and unkind, eh, Mrs. Winn?"

Even in my haste to be gone I was obliged to stop and brush away a tear caused by the sadness in Mr. Grassey's tone and manner as the door closed between us.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. WINN'S EFFORTS AT PROPITIATING HER.

MY VISITING list did not take me into the lower and more destitute parts of the city, but rather into those portions on either side above Thirty-fourth street occupied by the industrious poor. Children one found here in abundance, but they were for the most part healthy, happy specimens, who felt more interested in one's getting out of the way of their marbles or pennies than in picking one's pockets. Very rarely do you run across in this section of the city the hardened, bitter, old child-faces which tell of a parentage of crime. Many a beautiful picture comes to me now of sturdy, big-limbed workmen leading their children with all the gentleness of a mother, and mothers watching and guarding their infants as only mothers can. Children, like plants, are sure to repay all the care that is bestowed upon them. And it seems to me the lot of some of those children who receive the personal care of their parents, is a pleasanter one than Fifth avenue darlings brought up by servants.

I had soon found there was no use in indiscriminate calling. In a city where there are so many frauds constantly practiced one's time and labor is worse than wasted to attempt to influence perfect strangers. Thanks to my constant habit of taking the address of every girl who came near me I had quite a large number whom I could call upon with some slight hope of influencing. It is not a very long walk from Fifth avenue either way. This

morning I went east, and when I reached the place where by my list I saw that several girls lived in the same house on different floors, I said to myself: "There's no use in my going in to Mrs. O'Monahan's; I was there the other day, and her daughter is so taken up with Miss 'Dinnie,' as she calls her, that she will not attend until she knows it's her week." But as I was passing a voice called after me:

"Oh, now, Mrs. Whin, Mrs. Whin, is it ye's 'ull be passin' a friend an' not come in see her at all, at all?"

"You know, Mrs. O'Monahan, I came to see you the last time I was in the building and this morning I must go to others."

"Yis, yis, I knows," returned Mrs. O'Monahan, "but you must come in right away. I've got something that purty to show ye's, as 'ull make yer eyes water to see!" She followed up her words by taking hold of my hand and leading me back through the dark hall into a room lighted from a shaft. The room was used as a bedroom, out of which, on one end a closet-like apartment, also a bedroom, opened. At the other end was the general family living-room. "Make haste, Jinnie, and wipe off the chair-r fur the lady."

Jennie, a young thing of ten years, and her sister Biddy of twelve were doing the family washing. They both rushed to execute their mother's order, but Jennie was the spryest and with an article of underwear hastily wrung out (partly on the floor) she made the chair ready.

"Now sit ye's, till I show ye something *grand!*" exclaimed my hostess, as she disappeared into the next room and from that plunged head foremost into a dark abyss, which I recognized was used as a closet, for the articles of wearing apparel flew in every direction, as Mrs. O'Monahan sought for something that evidently had not been used lately.

"Did you ever see anything to bate this?" she inquired, triumphantly returning with a package and opening on my lap a roll of yellow satin.

"Why, what is this for, Mrs. O'Monahan?" I asked, my eyes dazzled by the brightness of the color.

"Shure its fur Miss Dinnie's nixt ball," she answered. "Biddy, will ye's lave off putting yer hands on it!" This to the girl who with hands right from the washtub was unable to restrain her desire "to see how it fild."

"And it's me Betsey as 'ull look foine in a garmint made out of the like o' that," expatiated the fond mother, "wid her pretty rid cheeks, her curly hair, and her nate, plumb figger." To thoroughly enjoy this description of Betsey the reader must be told that the hair of that damsel, though curly, and of a vivid carrot color, was always done up in a way to look as if she had returned from an unsatisfactory encounter with a brush heap. And alas! not only were "her cheeks rid" but her entire countenance glowed with a rubicund tinge only slightly relieved by big freckles. The "nate, plumb figger" of which her mother was so proud had a way of bursting out the seams of her waists, and oozing out at her sleeves, and overflowing at the neck which would lead an unprejudiced observer to apply a stronger adjective than "plump" to its copious proportions.

"But she's goin' to spile it all in the making," said Mrs. Kick, one of Mrs. O'Monahan's neighbors who, with several other women, had entered unannounced. "She's goin' to have the neck cut with a p'int back and front, when thar oughter be a square piece taken out which she might ha' used to make a pincushion."

"Ah, faith, Mrs. Kick, now," returned Mrs. O'Monahan, "does ye's think me Betsey 'ud be contint to be out of the stoile for the sake of havin' a pin cushion? Square nicks

is out, so that French gurl sid, and thim Frenchies be's death on stoil wid their long slim waists like me arr-n," and Mrs. O'Monahan brandished her huge red fore-limb by way of illustration, "and their hids cocked on one side just large enough fur their ilegant little bonnets."

"Yes, their heads are large enough for their bonnets but not for any sense!" exclaimed an Englishwoman by the name of Derby.

"Mrs. Derby's girl don't belong to the club, and she's jealous!" Mrs. O'Monahan observed to me by way of explanation.

"Then she is just the woman I want to see," I replied, feeling glæd of a turn in the conversation by which I might accomplish what I had started out for. "If your daughter does not belong to the club, I'd like to take her name, so that she might be considered a member." I liked the woman's general looks and air and I felt sure her daughter would be a girl well brought up.

"Thank you, no," Mrs. Derby replied decidedly, "if that is the result," pointing to the roll of yellow satin.

"I suppose ye's thinks that didn't cost quite enough a yard to suit!" rejoined Mrs. O'Monahan angrily.

"I think it cost quite too much for me to wish to be obliged to get anything like it," returned Mrs. Derby firmly.

"That jist shows how mane and stingy some peoples kin be!" broke in a pale woman dressed in a shabby black dress who, with a fretting infant in her arms, had a showy piece of silk, fashioning it into a sleeve. "Mrs. Darby had the imperence to tell me she thought I wuz woss thin wasting my toime makin' over this dress Miss Mittle guv Maggie and buyin' a little lace to go wid it. I suppose she thinks 'cause I'm a widdy I ortn't to hiv anything or me childers aither," and tears issued from Widow Flynn's

pale eyes, descending upon her infant, who entered a lively protest in a series of diminutive squalls against this form of shower bath.

"Howly mither, what's happened!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Monahan, as a deafening cry and a splash came from the corner where Jennie and Biddy were squabbling over the washtub. Biddy, alas! being the younger, had lost her balance and fallen headforemost into the sudsy deep.

"What kin I do for her, Mrs. Darby?" cried the mother holding her dripping child with one of her powerful arms and looking helplessly at her neighbor.

"Run for a blanket, Jennie," replied Mrs. Derby, and in a few minutes she had the child undressed and rubbed, a little hot ginger tea administered and tucked comfortably away in bed. When the excitement had died away I thought I would improve the opportunity to make a few remarks.

"You don't seem to find any difficulty in following Mrs. Derby's counsel when you get into actual trouble. How is it you scorn her words of wisdom in regard to the avoidance of certain extravagances, which you know, as well as I, will surely result in disaster? If Jennie and Biddy here had been at school, where by law they are bound to be, instead of being kept at home so their mother might make up worse than useless finery, this accident would not have happened. It is no kindness to Betsy O'Monahan or Maggie Flynn or any other girl, however much you as mothers may intend it as such, to give them a taste for extravagant dressing; to make them feel that it's of no consequence how hard their mothers work, or how much the rest of the family's neglected so that they may be better dressed than other girls. Look around you and see how much wretchedness is the result of such training, and covet for your daughters better things than fine clothes. Covet for them the best gifts that the Bible tells us about—the orna-

ment of a meek and quiet spirit, the clothing of righteousness." I slipped away after answering to the best of my ability various knotty problems that immediately seemed to arise, as for example, from Mrs. Flynn. "Did I think it 'ud be the Mittles, such ilegent people as they were and so they were, as 'ud be givin' her arything wrong, or what 'ud be spilin' Maggie's morals?" and from Mrs. O'Monahan, "Why shouldn't they be satisfied wid what rich folks were"—like satin, velvet and such stuff—she wasn't proud—and though the ornaments and clothing I spoke of were "foine, they were so plaguey hard to git, that"—and she finished her sentence with a deep-drawn sigh and a shake of her head.

I also sighed and shook my head after I left the gathering of women, thinking how much more powerful the influence of example was with them than any amount of preaching. How few sensible women like Mrs. Derby could be found who had the force of character to withstand the pressure of the times, which set in a strong current toward outside show, washed jewelry, costly amusements, and away from simple healthful pleasures and quiet home comforts! Just as if there was not enough misery in the world the result of actual sin, but they must add to the wretchedness by foolish expenditure. None of the women I had met in Mrs. O'Monahan's room but were able to live comfortably either by their husbands' efforts or their own and older sons' and daughters', when there was wisdom and judgment used in the outlay of the money. Indeed, many a thrifty family in the same circumstances were laying aside a trifle every week, sure to be needed on a rainy day.

My reflections were not allowed to continue long in this channel. They soon turned on the want of success I was having in persuading any one to come out that evening. All day I toiled up and down dark staircases, stopping at

lunch time in a little bakeshop kept by the father of one of our girls. Here I secured two girls for attendance the following evening, but when five o'clock arrived I had only four promised for this immediate day. I was feeling very much discouraged, as though I had wasted my time, and was just hesitating whether I should try one more family, living on the sixth floor of an adjoining building, or not, when a dark-browed girl accosted me. I recognized her. She was the ring-leader of those girls who had caused the refreshments to disappear the last evening Miss Mettle had the club. She was, however, very civil to-day and asked me if she could help find any one. I thanked her and told her I had the address, but was undecided as to whether I should go or not. She wanted to know if the club was still in existence.

I replied, "yes," and remarked that we had not seen her there lately. A quizzical expression appeared in her bold face as she said:

"I ain't ben nowhere much of late, except down to Jones's Woods on a racket or two. Guess I'll have to come round and enliven 'em up a bit, eh, Mrs. Winn?"

"No, you must come with a different motive than that, if you come, Mary," I said, taking the girl's grimy hand, on which numerous jewels, purporting to be diamonds and rubies, glittered in their brass and tin settings. I felt strangely moved as I looked into the depths of her black eyes with their heavy brows. "Here," I said to myself, "is a human soul endowed with more than ordinary powers, like a rudderless ship at sea, completely at the mercy of the waves of passion and vice. No wonder she is a leader. There is a something in her mere glance which arrests attention and compels homage. What a noble work it would be to induce such a lawless creature to turn from her evil ways!"

"Be they going to have refreshments, Mrs. Winn?" she asked, her eyes glistening with arrant roguery.

"Ah, Mary, I am sure you are sorry for having done such a bad, ungrateful deed the last time you were there."

"Humph! am I? Not if the court understands itself! It just sarved that tall pokerish pussun, what tried to be so turrible smart, and have us all a bobulating 'round, just right! Ho, ho, ho! I laugh every time I think of how beat she probably looked when she found out about it. There is only one thing which has troubled me, Mrs. Winn, and that is the fear lest that purty gal what was so meek and winsome like got blamed for it. Eh, did she?"

"No, Mary, no one thought of accusing her. But you made her feel badly as well as myself by doing as you did."

"Sho! you don't tell me. It seems queer to have any one but the police care for what I do. And you mean it too," she added, half to herself. "I can allers tell. Say, s'posin' I come 'round agen some time, would the cop be sent fur? I'll come and bring my regiment, eh?"

"No, if you behave yourself and come to get good you will be welcome any time."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SUDDEN CHANGE OF PLANS.

AFTER the foregoing conversation, I hurried home foot-sore and weary. I had torn the braid from my dress on the loose ends of the brass stair-protectors so that it hung in festoons, and ever and anon detained my pendulous heel, thereby threatening to bring on a general wreckage. But my physical ills were nothing in comparison to my mental and spiritual weariness at the depressing sights of mismanagement and shiftlessness which I had witnessed.

It was half-past six when I put my key in the door to enter the club rooms. I found a note had been thrust under the door which ran as follows:

“DEAR MRS. WINN:

“If you have been around getting up an audience for me this evening as you said you would the last time I saw you, please tell them not to come until to-morrow evening. To-day is Belle Round’s birthday, and we have decided to have a dance at the rooms, so we do not want any girls from the lower classes there.

“Yours, etc.,

ANNIE HOPPER.

“P. S.—You might keep two or three of the best looking to help you in the cloak room and for the tally, if some of us want to play cards.”

I breathed a sigh of relief as I thought of the few who had promised to come, all of whom I would urge to leave

as soon as possible and come again when their liability of being exposed to frivolous vain influences would not be so great.

I had done as I intended. The few girls who kept their appointment I had urged to leave and all but one had been very docile and obliged me cheerfully. I sat expectantly, the gas turned on, in chandeliers and burners at the sides of the room. I had time for musing and as I looked at the brilliancy of the light I was led into a train of thought which often attracted me—the waste of necessary and useful material by careless management. There was that gas giving out enough light to have made comfortable and happy a dozen families. While only one person was being benefited and, strictly speaking, she (that was to say, myself) would have preferred the light from an humble “tallow dip” as being softer and pleasanter.

Eight o'clock, half-past eight, nine o'clock, half-past nine came and went and no one appeared. I had grown sleepy from inaction and the day's toils. I roused up every once in a while as I heard the stopping of carriage wheels on the street below, thinking that surely now the merry-makers had arrived, but no one coming up I dozed off again. It is a question whether I should not have sat in my chair and slept the night away, my best dress on and the light shining out a brilliant welcome, had I not been roused in a most summary manner about half-past eleven.

“Oh, Mrs. Winn, Mrs. Winn, we have been havin' just the most glorious lark yous ever heard on!” exclaimed the dark-browed Mary Sharkey, bursting into the room followed by a dozen of her regiment.

“Why, what have you been up to now?” I replied, as the girls in various stages of convulsive merriment reeled around the room.

"Why, you see," began one—"It all came along of——" chimed in another.

"Hold up there now, girls, I'm the one to do the talking," said Mary with decision. "After I left you, Mrs. Winn, I met several of my regs and I sa's to 'em, sez I, 'Gals, what's a-brewin' for to-night?' 'Nuthin';' they says, 'and there ain't bin nuthin' fur the longest while.' 'Supposin' then,' sez I, 'that we go 'round to our club, the Working Girl's Club, where accordin' to the papers we get teeched so many fine things. Mayhap if they can't go far to teech us nuthin' we may be able to gin them an idee or two.' Little did I think I should be called on to enforce my notions afore I entered the door. But oh, dear me!" and at this the whole company went off again in shrieks of laughter. "When we reached the entrance and were about to clumb the stairs a carriage druve up and a short dumpish gal with face as red as fire, and big blue onionish eyes, a-bungin' out of their sockets, drest to kill, with white slippers and heels on 'em a story and a half high, walked up to me with the air of a lettle turkey gobbler who wished to pass fur a big un and she says, 'You need not ascend those stairs this evening, we have concluded to dispense with your society until to-morrow.' 'Excuse me, madam,' I replied, trying to imitate her lofty airs,"—"('And she *did*, too," from the girls.)—" 'I don't think you know who you are talking to. I am not one of your associates bound fur a ball; I am nuthin' but one of the poor working girls bound for the club rooms upstairs.'

" 'You need not tell me what you are or what you are not. Don't you suppose I *know*?' replied this person, in a passion. 'All you need, is to do as you are told, and take yourself off, at the shortest possible notice.'

" 'That is exactly what I do not propose to do,' I replied.

'I was invited here this afternoon and unless Mrs. Winn comes and tells me to go away I shall stay.'

"'Did you ever hear such insolence?' she muttered to the man with her. 'Policeman,' she called, 'I wish you would take these disorderly persons in charge. They are seriously annoying me.'

"I looked and sure as fate the policeman was Mike Sweeney, an old flame of mine. I sez, 'Hullo, Mike, you have strict orders about looking after persons as is what madam here is pleased to call us, but have you orders that compel you to keep persons from going where they are invited?'

"'Ho, ho, ho!' laughs Mike. 'You's a sharp 'un as iver. Mar-r-ry, what you been up to now?'

"'I don't care to listen to any of your coarse, low familiarities, policeman. Do your duty as I've told you to or I shall report you;' and the toss she gave her head and the stamp she gave with her foot made you think of kings and queens a-heelin' it 'round on the nicks of their subjects.

"'Lady, excuse me, but I must be *jest* to all; so I must go fur to understand what this 'ere Mar-r-ry has been after perpetuatin' afore I act.'

"'Mike, *is* there, or is there *not* a Working Girls' Club upstairs?' I asked.

"'Faith thin, there *is*!' he replied, drawing a dirty old paper out of his pocket; for Mike allers prided himself on bein' more intellectual than the ginerality.

"'Well,' I said, 'I was invited there this afternoon by *jest* the swatest little lady you ever seen and now this pusson proposes to order me off *jest* as if I was goin' where I had no business.'

"'I don't propose to stand here bandying words with such impudent people any longer. Policeman, if you can't do

your duty, I shall drive to the police headquarters and have you removed.'

"'Don't give yourself any onasiness on that score,' replied Mike under the gas lamp with his big finger pointing out a passage in the paper. 'I'm a man as can't be bate fur a-doin' on me dooty. This 'ere passage tells me what that is, howiver,' and in a slow way he read: "'This greatest charity of the city of New York is fur the wage-arnin' class of womin. There are rooms prepared for thim where ivery avenin' they may resave (receive) rist and comfort and halp from sympathoizin' ladies who tache thim various useful and naceus'ry as will as ornimintal occupations. This week they will be instructed in poickry and the arts.'" Now, Mar-r-ry, it's your right to go to these rooms and as fur yes, lady, ye've made a mistake! Delmonico's is whar yes belong.' And in spite of that lady's ravin's and tearin's—and she did take on turrible"—("That she did!" from the girls.)—"Mike called out, 'Driver, Delmonico's!' and off they went. Every carriage that cumed up after that Mike stood there and would not let any one get out. He stepped to the carriage-door and said: 'There's a mistake bin made; you're not to stop here. Driver, Delmonico's.' Mrs. Winn, we could not resist the larks it were to stand there and see the peoples be ordered off to Delmonico's. Sure, if Mike 'ud bin the Pope he couldn't have acted anyways nater. He's a-standin' there so tall and commandin'-lookin' with his long arm stretched out, a-sayin', 'Driver, Delmonico's.'"

I felt perturbation mingled with my amusement at the account Mary Sharkey gave of the change in Assembly Rooms ordered by Mike the policeman. I had grave fears lest the combined wrath of the three fair philanthropists be visited, as on former occasions, on poor, innocent me, being the only available object upon which to wreak their

displeasure. But I was mistaken. Never by any word or sign did they allude to the episode. Evidently Mike, standing tall and gaunt with extended forefinger, pointed out to them their own foolishness as well as the proper place for the entertainment they had in hand.

They continued to hold me responsible for the attendance which fluctuated greatly; and as I was blamed as much when there were too many, as when there were not enough, my life was far from being a peaceful one.

Another great cause of disturbance was donations of money. They were exceedingly lowspirited and irritable when money did *not* come in; but that was nothing to the jealousy and wrath that a big sum excited, no matter to whom it was given. Perhaps I could not give a better illustration than to describe the effect produced by Mr. K. Roundout Grout's donation. The three fair grapplers with the problem of the elevation of the masses happened to be in the rooms when the postman brought the important letter bearing on the outside the names of the trio. For it was by this means Mr. Grout thought he would be able to mislead his fair mother-in-law while he intended to follow the check round and personally urge its application to the object specified. Miss Annie Hopper took the missive from my hands and was proceeding to open it with great expedition when Miss Mettle and Miss Denny, perhaps to improve their skill in grappling and be able to include the tangible with the intangible, relieved her of the responsibility forthwith. Miss Mettle finally got hold of the largest half, but Miss Denny hung on to a corner in spite of Miss Mettle's repeated command:

"Let go, Grace Denny, you'll tear it. Then how much will it be worth?"

"I don't care, I don't care," returned Miss Denny. "My

name stands first on the envelope and I ought to open it. And I will open it!"

"Never! Mr. Grout hardly knows you. He has sent this to me, whoever's gone and written the three names on the outside."

While these two were in the most heated part of their colloquy the amiable Miss Hopper appeared with a pitcher of water from my room, which she threw all over both. Miss Mettle saw what was coming so she was prepared, but Miss Denny had her back turned and the water struck her in the neck, percolating unpleasantly as well as startlingly down her spine. She lost her hold of the letter and when she saw who had caused her the start and realized the amount of damage that had been done to her crimps, she decided to leave Miss Mettle and settle accounts with Annie Hopper. I had to hasten to get out of the way, for although I knew there were noble men who devoted their lives to the excavating of ruins and the digging out of buried treasures, I feared no one would be interested to exhume me from the ruins I foresaw were to be the result of the impending encounter. And how my fears were verified! A beautiful carved table was upset and broken with the bric-à-brac upon it. The back of a chair was broken by falling over, several choice bits of glass were jarred from the mantle-piece and dashed in pieces, and finally a portière from which the fringe hung in a way to catch Miss Hopper's foot was nearly torn in two by the weight of her falling body. Instead of feeling satisfied with the sight of her fallen foe, Miss Denny only rejoiced that she was thus enabled to visit upon her the full measure of her wrath, and she pummelled her well.

"I should think you'd be ashamed to act like common street arabs!" exclaimed Miss Mettle, coming forward to

separate the two contestants and evidently in a bad humor herself.

"I'll teach Annie Hopper to throw water on me again!" exclaimed Miss Denny, breathing hard and looking very much excited.

"I wish I had the Atlantic ocean here, I'd pour it all on you!" returned Miss Hopper very red, her protuberant blue eyes glaring wrathfully at her assailant.

"Now, let's see what's in that letter, Ray Mettle," exclaimed Grace Denny. She was quick enough this time to seize the envelope and lo! and behold there was the announcement that each one of them was to have one thousand dollars!

The accompanying note stated that the gift was intended to relieve the Working Girls' Club of the amount of indebtedness it was now under to the rector of the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven.

"That is not what my thousand dollars will be used for!" exclaimed Miss Denny emphatically. "I have just been wishing for more money to get ready for my next ball, and here it is. Now I can have better music and more floral decorations, and I mean to!"

The matter was argued over at length. Heat and spirit were used on both sides. Miss Denny would not yield. Then Miss Mettle and Annie Hopper discussed the probability of the rector's taking the two thousand, but he had stated that he did not wish the principal paid for five years and only when the whole amount could be handed him. Miss Hopper was very strenuous in her endeavors to have Miss Mettle make up the missing thousand and settle at once, but that Miss Mettle as strenuously opposed and finally she announced that as Grace Denny was going to use her thousand to please herself, Annie Hopper and she might as well follow suit. To Miss Hopper's credit it may

be stated that this plan was resisted by her very stoutly for some time, but finally seeing the futility of resistance she decided she would devote a part of her thousand to rewards of merit; attendance on her evenings being harder to secure. She would therefore offer prizes to those coming the most regularly. This she deemed merely a necessity arising from the inability of the working girl to appreciate their absolute need of poetry and art for improving their lot in life.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. WINN'S NEPHEW.

MY CORRESPONDENCE with my nephew began to mystify me. He kept me well supplied with pictures of himself in which I could observe the changes taking place in his outward man. I used to get them all out together sometimes and note the similarities and the differences—there were the smooth-faced ones, then those where there was a “downiness” about the chin and lips, and still others where this downiness had developed into quite formidable mustache and whiskers. I often sighed and said if the dear boy would only keep me as well informed as regards his inner man—his every-day hopes and fears, his trials and temptations, his hungerings and thirstings, what a happy woman I should be. But he seemed to think there was nothing to write about unless there was a great public building to describe, a gigantic scheme for advancing the improvement of society at large, to explain to me, and, as for answering questions, why he never once thought of such a thing! I found I might wear my pen to a stub asking them, without any hopes of being answered. How out of patience I used to get with the dear boy! It was a rare thing for him even to mention receiving my letters, and, as for their contents, I might just as well have sent him blank paper. I tried it once, and his reply was a long and elaborate description of a Chinese procession and a present of a pretty embroidered Chinese silk shawl—never a word as to what my blank paper might mean. What

could be done with such an incorrigible dear? Nothing in the world but to go on writing him the best letters I knew how, patiently waiting for the time to come when I might be with him and epistolary efforts be set aside.

But I had noticed a change in his letters for the past month or two. Moralizings on the rapidity of the flight of time, or the inability of man to fathom providences, or the instability of fortune, or the necessity of upright principles for business men, seemed to take the place of descriptions of places and events. And in one he gave me the history of a friend, from the time he first knew him (and if the dear boy could only have been half as confidential concerning himself) until this friend committed the great mistake of his life—to get married.

I tried to be wise and judicious in my reply to this letter, for I thought, with my nephew, that a great many marriages might prove more happy if delayed until the husband's fortunes proved more secure, but, on the other hand, I did not want my nephew to grow up into confirmed old bachelorhood habits, as it would be so easy for him to, off by himself, so absorbed in his business that the blessings and delights of home life would not attract him.

"Ah," I thought to myself, sad, bad matchmaker that I was, "if he could only become interested in Agnes Dearborn, what a blessing for both!"

But I did not on that account mention Agnes in my letter. Oh, no! I was too wary for that. I had known altogether too many instances of persons suitable in every respect separated through the mistaken zeal of friends, having nothing against each other except the Athenian's reason for not voting for Aristides—a weariness "of hearing him continually called 'the Just.'" I asked him where he was going to spend his next vacation, and told him it was so long since he had been in New York I thought he

had better come on, if possible. Of course I did not expect him to allude to the subject in his next letter, and of course I realized my anticipations. Instead, he continued the subject of matrimony, giving more and weightier reasons why his friend, in particular, and young men in general, should not marry young. What he said on the subject in connection with the usual idea of constancy pleased me, because it showed so much more penetration and reflection than one would expect in a young man of twenty-two.

"Some people urge against youthful marriages the great want of constancy, in men especially. But there can be no possible danger from inconstancy when a man feels the expulsive power of a *true* affection in his heart; and, of course, no man of principle or sense would marry otherwise." Then, after further observations in the same strain, he said, in closing: "These lines of Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton appeal to me strongly:

*'I would, indeed, that heaven had made me meet;
Content to hold and fill a second place;
Take lesser love as undeserved grace. . . .*

*.
But I was made with passionate, strong soul,
And what I would, I would have wholly mine;
And if I bow my head to Love's control,
And to his keeping all myself consign,
It must be Love that answers to my need,
That loves me wholly, and is Love indeed.'"*

When I had finished reading that letter I threw up my hands, exclaiming:

"Well, if that is not enough to puzzle a crow! The boy starts out severely reproving the idea of matrimony, and closes by quoting a love sonnet. Perhaps some very astute

mind might be able to tell whether the fellow is contemplating taking upon himself vows of eternal celibacy or has already one foot on the hymeneal altar, but that person is not his poor old aunt. All she can do is to earnestly hope it is neither the one thing nor the other."

In the meantime, Annie Hopper continued her readings and recitations to the girls, and the character of them grew more tender and amorous daily. I was startled to pick up an envelope which the young lady dropped and find the handwriting resembled so nearly that of my nephew. Quite a coincidence! I would not allow my mind to entertain for a moment the thought that there could be such a ghastly reality as that my precious boy was corresponding with Miss Hopper!

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. ISLIP'S INVESTIGATION HAS AN UNHAPPY TERMINATION.

TOGETHER with the three fair philanthropists, Mrs. Islip felt disturbed at the disposition her dear Son-in-law Grout had made of the check for three thousand dollars. To have it returned with the name of the organization, "Working Girls' Club," instead of the name of some officer of that organization, gave her no clew to the solution of the problem of the identity of the young lady her son-in-law "loved" and fain would marry with such expedition.

Nevertheless, she smiled as sweetly while placing the check in her desk, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, as though she had gained all the information she desired.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she finally said, laughing softly. "That blundering, thick-pated donkey deceive me! How amusing! I can go this very morning to a place where I can learn the truth, if, indeed, I think it worth while to take the trouble!" and she stopped a moment to consider. Evidently she decides it is worth while, for at the expiration of a short time she calls her maid and announces her intention of going out unattended.

Her destination is the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven. As she gives the order to her coachman and her carriage door shuts with a bang, she says to herself, "No place to go to like the sanctuary when one is in trouble. Ha, ha, ha!"

While she is driving down the avenue it is necessary to interpose a few explanatory remarks.

Among the various changes that the Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven considered essential to the welfare of his church, besides the change of name, were certain alterations and improvements which it was his delight "to spring upon" his congregation, to use a homely phrase, from time to time. The phrase is used advisedly, for nothing could better express the methods of his carrying on his operations. The first year of his incumbency he had announced from the holy desk, "That, as it was deemed expedient to worship the Lord with more beauty of surroundings as well as of holiness, the congregation would assemble for a few months in the vestry and Sabbath-school rooms while alterations were being made." Such statements caused the vestrymen to start visibly, but as each one thought the plans had been adopted the time or times he had not attended the vestry meetings, they did not feel like instituting any inquiries.

When the alterations were completed it was as though the congregation were being ushered into one of the Pope's private chapels in the Vatican at Rome. In fact, the Rev. Mortimer Augustus Dunraven during his year in Italy—the year which is given many of our youthful clergy immediately after graduation, for their spiritual improvement and upbuilding, but which is so often turned, as in the case of the gentleman under consideration, into a year of running after and establishing themselves in all the foolish affectations and extravagances they meet—had conceived the idea of modelling any church he might become connected with after this celebrated edifice. There was the tessellated floor, and the rector's idea was to banish seats, after Continental and Popish usages, but there were so many of his aged parishioners whose limbs, from rheumatism and other causes, had given out the first few Sundays the trial was made that he was forced to listen to the com-

plaint of his sexton, a distinguished and lordly-looking personage, who came to him and said:

"I grieve to have to offer any complaint, Mr. Dunraven, but during the thirty years I have gone for to——" (here the sexton coughed—it always seemed to affect his throat badly to mention his calling) "I have gone for to—to give my attention to the supervision of the internal arrangements of this here sanctuary, I never have been called on to do such heavy work as during the past month. And last Lord's day—was it last Lord's day?—no, I think it was last Lord's day a week, Mrs. Bullwinkle, it seemed to me, weighed a good plump ton! How me and my assistant ever got her up and out I never shall know. Mrs. Tester and Miss Bates last week wasn't so bad, but unless you get some seats in there'll have to be some strong men advertised for. I think I know a coal-heaver or two as would like to get an extra job on Sunday for carrying out them as can't stand during the entire service."

The rector decided to introduce the seats rather than advertise for the men, but to counteract this departure from his original high-church and Romish plans he introduced also a couple of shrines, and kept the most expensive tapers burning before them.

The new Confessional Hall was the last "jack in the box" which he had revealed to his delighted admirers. It was in the rear of the church and made from an enlargement and elongation of the sacristy. It was a many-windowed corridor, and the windows were of richly stained glass. Opinion was so strong against the establishment of a confessional when he commenced this alteration that it was only "an improvement of the sacristy," until the very last, when, lo! there appeared, together with an enlarged place for the many vestments of the new ceremonial, a corridor for the confessional.

To Mrs. Islip and the large class of fashionable women she represents this introduction of the confessional was a great attraction. There was no feeling that the low evangelical church of St. Christopher had been disloyal to its faith and denomination by allowing such an innovation.

"It makes a person narrow-minded to be loyal or devoted to any one cause, I have noticed," she said to the rector.

"You are quite right, madam," he had rejoined, "and narrow-mindedness is one of the most alarming evils of the age. No one will ever know how greatly my onward and outward progress has been hampered by this same terrible ill!" and he shook his head and sighed deeply.

The reader may feel interested to know that the hampering above referred to came from certain mild objections raised by the rector's vestrymen to his placing a Mohammedan inscription from the Koran over the outside entrance to the chapel. An inside inscription they had winked at, or else had mistaken for a passage of Scripture in the original, but their views had not become so broad as to make it a matter of indifference to them whether their house of worship was taken for an infidel or Christian sanctuary. In these days, when liberal ideas and breadth of thought is such an absolute necessity in order to even up matters and not have certain of our clergy so much farther advanced than their charges in this direction, there ought to be some means devised whereby shepherd and flock could be sent to the Continent together. This can be effected in the near future doubtless by means of the air carriages which we are promised. Then motions to introduce Romish, Mohammedan, Grecian, Arabian, pagan, theosophical or other improvements from the dark ages might be carried without a dissenting voice.

But Mrs. Islip's carriage has drawn up before the new

door put in at the side of the church, leading to the new corridor, and the reader will be interested to follow her movements.

She found quite a number of ladies assembled in the corridor, at the further end of which, curtained off with heavy velour hangings, was the confessional box. The first to attract her attention was a figure, tall and lank, clothed in a peculiar gown made of coarse sackcloth. The gown seemed to consist of three open bags—one long bag drawn up around the neck for the body and two shorter ones for the arms. The person thus arrayed proved to be Miss Nevins, and she took great pride in calling attention to her new “confessional robe.”

“It is imported, you know,” she confided to every one who would listen to her. “Such cloth as this is manufactured solely for the cardinals, bishops and priests to practice their austerities in—holy cloth.”

Some one took up a corner, and, putting a finger through the loose meshes, said:

“Quite true, in more senses than one.”

“I’d never dare be so irreligious as to joke on such a serious subject,” Miss Nevins replied, reprovingly. “The style is imported, too. Worth sent an artist to spend two months on the Nile picking up unique Oriental designs for these robes, and this is the most distingué and chaste of his collection. What do you think of it?” she continued.

“There’s no doubt but you look chaste in it—that is, chased by a mad dog or a bull,” replied the same person who had spoken before.

“How any one can pun and jest in such a sacred place as this I do not see!” exclaimed Miss Nevins, with tears in her weak blue eyes. “I was going to tell you something more about it, but now I won’t. Only I’ll say this much,

you can't any of you copy the style. It won't be fair! It's protected!" So saying, Miss Nevins went off by herself into a corner, where she looked like nothing so much as a limp bundle of dirty clothes.

Mrs. Islip had hoped to arrive at the church at the hour when the rector's assistant should be relieving his principal of the duty of shriving the penitent, but although it was the hour for the curate to occupy the confessional box, she managed to find by passing the heavy velour curtains when her dress parted the drapery, that the rector was detained by no less a personage than Mrs. Mettle. She then remembered that it was the day for high confessional, when the fee had been raised from the usual five-dollar amount to ten dollars.

"Mrs. Mettle's thrift compels her to make a double-lengthed confession, I see," Mrs. Islip said to herself.

There were abundant proofs that this judgment was correct. Among them, the fact that the seat provided for the penitents being a wooden stool high enough to have made the limbs of such a short person as Mrs. Mettle dangle uncomfortably, was moved without the curtain and a cushioned armchair and comfortable hassock took its place. Mrs. Islip judged that the rector must have beheld these preparations with misgivings, which had been more than realized before her arrival, for Mrs. Mettle had been discoursing for the last three-quarters of an hour, every once in a while looking in her lap, where lay a memorandum of a list of subjects for her to talk upon, and if she continued as long on each as she had just done on "Thieving Servants," which was only half way down the column, it did not seem that she would cease for the next half day. Mrs. Islip heard the rector try a little flattery. Breaking into Mrs. Mettle's uninterrupted flow of talk without waiting for what seldom came—a pause—he said:

"Dear Mrs. Mettle, you have a very tender conscience. I only wish all my congregation would emulate your noble example!" while he thought to himself: "If they did I'd have to erect five more confessional boxes and keep a man in each one the entire twenty-four hours."

"Now, Rector," was Mrs. Mettle's reply, "don't you interrupt me, and you'll hear something that will show you still better how good and clever I am, and what a tender conscience I have. Now, let me see, where was I? I remember! I was telling you about Kittie Larkins. She had tow hair. She never kept it smooth. She seemed to have no adequate idea of what smooth was. She'd put some kind of oily stuff on that would scent up the rooms so that I was obliged to have Maria take her and soak her head for half a day. Then a brush heap of fully charged electric wires was smooth beside her. I can't begin to tell you what a trial that girl's hair was to me. I bore it with what fortitude I could command, however, and I don't think I said anything bad—that is, not very bad—not nearly so bad as you'd expect, when you considered how tried I was. By the way, I'd like to stop and ask you just how emphatic a person *could be* in her language without being profane, but I must go on now about Kittie."

Mrs. Mettle little realized how close to that debatable region between emphasis and profanity she was driving the rector. He sat in the box clothed in a long, rough camel's hair robe, with a ropen girdle about his loins. A pointed hood or cowl was attached to the neck of the robe, and this he kept over his head after having tried the effect of both ways on his assistant. It was decidedly more picturesque and austere, as well as uncomfortable, to have the head covered. For the sake of the picturesqueness and austerity he could endure the discomfort, which was greatly augmented by the fact of his being obliged to have a stiffening to pre-

serve its upright, conical appearance. To the casual observer he was the embodiment of serenity and devout piety.

"She was so stupid," continued Mrs. Mettle, "that no matter how many times I told her she was never to place a pair of bronze vases in a certain position, she always would forget and put them just as I told her not to. The vases were some Tuftus and I got before bronze was—er—ex—actly—er—fashionable—well, that is, for us." That was the way Mrs. Mettle referred to the days when she and Tuftus lived in a more limited way than at present. "And Tuftus will not have them removed. But there are several places where it shows most unmistakably that they are not pure bronze, and as these places are all on one side, it is very easy, with care, to preserve their want of purity a state secret. One day before my daughter's coming-out party, when I was working with might and main to make it a success—not sleeping nights with my plannings, and dashing about days, as Tuftus used to say, 'like a wild woman after a mosquito,' Mrs. Van Oldensnob came in to call. I was *delighted!* That meant no end of things then, though now I consider I've passed the Van Oldensnobs several lengths. She got to talking about some presents she had just received on her birthday. One was a pair of bronze vases, which she described in glowing terms, till she turned around and spied mine, when she said: 'They are something like yours, Mrs. Mettle.' Then she stopped short. I looked to see what was the matter, and I can't express my horror and shame! That wretched girl had arranged those vases so that you could not have been any more certain that they were tin if you had seen them dug out of the mine. The rest of that woman's call was a blank to me ever afterward! I never could remember what she said or what I said, or whether there *was anything* said. I called Kittie, and was presenting her with those wretched vases,

together with the most withering remarks on her stupidity and carelessness. I meant to have her bundled out of the house before Tuftus came in. But I was not successful. He came in. And if ever a man needed to come around to confessional he does. He talked perfectly terrible about my sending the girl off with those vases as pay for a few months' wages, just as if she might not think herself well off if she had them for a year's service, after making me appear so ridiculous at such a critical time. Tuftus has a great many faults for a man with so many good qualities. That makes me think of another girl, Marcella Lowdownsky."

The serenity of the austere draped person in the confessor's box was being affected. He tried to remain outwardly passive, but he managed to write a few lines, which ran thus:

"Get all the choir boys in the building together as soon as you can, and have them strike that high C and hold on to it through twelve measures, which occurs in the 'Mass for Lost Spirits' they are practicing for St. Lucifer's Day."

This note he handed to a boy, who noiselessly opened the door in the back of the confessional box in answer to the electric bell, which the rector could touch with his foot.

Mrs. Mettle found the narration of the faults of Marcella Lowdownsky even more amusing and entertaining, to herself at least, than the previous story of Kittie Larkins; that is, if one could judge from the greater mass of detail which she was throwing into it.

The ladies waiting for their turns had ceased to walk up and down. Miss Nevins was nodding over in her corner. Miss Mettle and Miss Denny had both arrived, but their eyes were fixed on the floor and their brows were ever and anon contracted with frowns, as thoughts of a perplexing nature filled their minds. The noise from the street

came in a dull, distant murmur. A large clock in one corner made itself very prominent by its loud ticking. But suddenly this peace and quiet were broken by a loud, prolonged—well, shriek best describes the first impression. Every one started to their feet. Miss Nevins joined in a sympathetic refrain. Mrs. Mettle's interest in the further recital of Marcella's doings seemed to be instantly destroyed, as the rector had believed that it would be. She arose hastily, saying:

"What is that? I *must* go and see!" And in her anxiety she forgot the hassock at her feet, and nearly fell over it. By the time, however, that any of the ladies could reach the door at the further end of the corridor the choir boys had descended from their high perch on the alarming C and were warbling around on more frequented notes, which caused the ladies, some of them shamefacedly, to return with the assurance that nothing more to be dreaded than a rehearsal was taking place.

This short interruption afforded the rector the opportunity he had so devoutly craved of throwing his austere outer garment around the form of his assistant and sending him into the confessional box. But before this change had been effected Mrs. Islip had been able to have a short conversation with Mr. Baddicker, the curate.

She evidently had interviewed him before, for when he saw her he advanced to meet her, holding out his hand with something in it.

"I'm afraid I shall not be able to do as you asked me the last time we met, Mrs. Islip; so as an honorable man I must return you this," handing her a gold eagle.

"Why, Mr. Baddicker, you surprise me!" exclaimed Mrs. Islip, arching her eyebrows and laughing merrily. "I supposed one of the principal reasons for having a confessional was to give the confessor perfect command of all

the secret longings and aspirations of his complainant's heart. Is not that the reason some husbands foolishly object to their wives going to confessional, and, in consequence, an estrangement ensues? But I cannot imagine why it should be so," Mrs. Islip continued half to herself. "I should be so glad to hear Silas had gone to confessional and had any longings and aspirations except for me to make him out checks for large amounts, that, instead of feeling estranged, my affection for him would be greatly intensified. Moreover, Mr. Baddicker," she resumed, addressing the curate, "if this knowledge is only used for the advantage of all concerned, as, in this case, it will be, there can certainly be no objection to your finding out for me which of the three young ladies cares for, or is possibly now engaged to, my son-in-law."

Mrs. Islip paused, waiting for a rejoinder from her companion, but instead of saying anything he shrugged his shoulders and a foxy look appeared on his countenance. And this kind of a look was by no means foreign or out of character, for Curate Baddicker's face showed a low, retreating forehead, sharp, black eyes set near together, and a prominent nose; and it would be easier to imagine him either evolved from or about to be metamorphosed into a fox than any other animal.

Mrs. Islip understood the man and what made him hesitate, for she took out her purse and placed another eagle by the one already in his palm. That did not satisfy, for he let them both remain, and not till she had placed coin to the amount of one hundred and fifty dollars did he show any signs of being content to comply with her request. It is not certain that he would have stopped then, had he not heard footsteps approaching, and his anxiety to keep the transaction a secret made him close the bargain.

Reference has already been made to the liberal views

of Rector Mortimer Augustus Dunraven and of his wish to embody and exemplify all sorts of religious beliefs, Christian as well as heathen. And it is a singular fact which has been verified even by the author's limited experience, that when a man or a church shows this tendency the heathenish influences are apt to get the upper hand and choke out the simply Christian. But the rector had many sympathizers with his way of thinking, and one who aided him greatly in his work of broadening the views of the majority of his congregation was a lady of wealth by the name of Mrs. Trotlander. She craved the privilege of presenting the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven with a confessional box, and in order that she might use that object to convey notable lessons every time it was gazed upon, she had a minaret on the top, like that of a famous Greek church. This minaret was carved over with Persian ornamentations, embodying figures of fire-worshippers.

"Oh, those beautiful fire-worshippers!" she was wont to say, clasping her hands fervently and looking heavenward. "How *far* in advance of us at the present day!"

At the base of the minaret were carved Confucian, Buddhistic and Theosophical wise sayings, which were faithfully numbered and their translations catalogued. The window was patterned after the strange apertures allowed in Burmese temples. But the most striking innovation was its being placed on rockers and facing the East, so that like the Mohammedan it might bow in the right direction every time any one entered its sacred precincts. Mr. Baddicker had to exercise care in settling himself in this swaying box, for he was a large, fat man and he knew Mrs. Trotlander would be so shocked she never would be able to forgive him if her efforts at broadening the minds of her fellow worshippers should also be made

to serve as a type of sudden and disastrous overthrow by any untoward movements on his part. He had succeeded in accomplishing this delicate feat, however, and had heard the confessions of several old ladies, who had corrected him quite sharply on several points relating to theology and social ethics when to his relief he saw the further door close on the figure of Mrs. Islip. He experienced great relief at this, for he feared she might be on hand when he was listening to a voice that was growing dearer to him than life, viz., the voice of Miss Ray Mettle. Her image, resplendent in its brave purple velvet suit, had been before his mental vision and had been the constraining cause of his driving a bargain that otherwise he would have been afraid to drive with Mrs. Islip. "But how many flowers and how much confectionery could a man get for ten dollars?" he had repeatedly asked himself. He scorned the idea that she of the steely-grey eyes, whose slightest glance sent such transports into his soul, could be thinking of anyone save himself, for had she not waited so as to come to confession, when he was the confessor he did not care to think how many times and if any one had told him—four—the actual number—he would have denied it stoutly and declared that forty was nearer the truth, into such blissful eternities does love convey even unworthy souls, like the curate's. Moreover did she not make excuses to engage him in conversation longer than any occasion, save the occasion of wishing to be near him and hear his voice, required? To be sure she talked of his superior, the rector, but that was natural, because of their having so few topics in common upon which they could talk.

The state of transport into which he was thrown because of the success of his interview with Mrs. Islip, was one cause of his being taken to task by an old lady on his

theological standard. For in answer to her question, asked with tears in her eyes and choking utterance:

"How long after death do you suppose I shall have to wait before my soul will be joined by my body and I be recognized by my friends?"

He had answered, all smiles and satisfaction:

"Oh, immediately, madam, perhaps to-day," his own mind being given over to thinking of Miss Mettle and how he should probably propose to her that very morning.

He realized his mistake when he saw the tears suddenly disappear and heard the old lady say:

"'To-day!' young man, 'to-day,' what do you mean by such a flippant reply? 'I am not dying' to-day! I have had dim suspicions for a long time that there was a tendency to be erratic and equivocal in the theology of the present, but if you are trained to give such replies to such serious questions as mine; there is no longer any doubt about it in my mind;" and nothing the curate could say in excuse of his mistake prevented the old lady from shaking her head and leaving him in a state of high displeasure.

As Miss Mettle approached the tall minaret on top of the confessional box quivered with the excitement of its occupant and she said to the curate, looking up at its dizzy height and then at him:

"You do not think it will fall over? It seems to me to be shakier than ever this morning."

And the curate had replied in some trepidation:

"You did not notice that it bowed in any other direction than toward the East, did you?"

"I could not see that it confined its motions to any one direction. It seemed to bob round in every way. Why does not Mrs. Trotlander, if she wishes to use it as a type, a figure, an emblem of the Mohammedan form of worship, have it made so that it will move only toward the East?"

"She *has* tried and she *is* trying, at least she is paying men to experiment," replied the curate, gazing with rapture into Miss Mettle's eyes and finding in their cold, steely depths complete satisfaction. "But in the meantime she expects me and every one who gets into this place to manage so that its motions may typify adoration of that one point of the compass. It is very hard for me to do this when there is,—when there is—any one near me——"

"Like Mrs. Trotlander, for instance," interrupted Miss Mettle.

The burst of subdued (?) laughter which greeted this sally brought a smile of satisfaction to Miss Mettle's countenance at the same time that an increase in the stir outside reminded her of what she had almost entirely forgotten, viz.—that she was supposed to be at confessional. This made her mention in a casual way a few of her most praiseworthy shortcomings, which were discoursed upon at length by her admirer, and shown to be *not* faults, but absolutely shining and transparent virtues. About this time if the curate's ears had not been so absorbed in listening to Miss Mettle, he might have heard footsteps pausing in the passageway just back of the confessional box and a door beside that of the secret door leading into his place pushed gently open. The truth is, that Mrs. Islip, before reaching the outside door in passing from the confessional corridor into the street, was stopped by Rector Dunraven, who asked her if she would not like to look at some new and costly vestments just received. Upon her answering in the affirmative he conducted her to this passageway and asked her to wait there as the light was better, until he returned with the garments in question. He was detained by a knotty question propounded by the sexton. During his absence, Mrs. Islip, looking about her and realizing

that she was very near the curate who was pledged to do her bidding, gently pushed open the door. "I wonder whom he is shriving," she said to herself. As if in answer to her mental questioning she heard at that instant the curate say:

"I am sure, Miss Mettle, that you must know."

"Oh ho," said Mrs. Islip to herself, "he is getting right to work to solve my problem for me. I thought him a knave for extracting so much money from me, but now I do not think he is much beside a poor fellow hard up and anxious to make all he can, no matter how." Her reflections lost Mrs. Islip Miss Mettle's rejoinder. The next thing was the curate's reply in faltering accents:

"But I *must* tell you. I *cannot* keep it to myself."

"The miserable wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Islip under her breath, her artless suavity for the once entirely banished by her excitement. "He is going to tell her all about my plans!" She involuntarily put her hand upon the box, which was set in motion by her touch. Ordinarily, the curate would have been alarmed by this manifestation of an outside power giving motion to the seat he occupied, but now, so absorbed was he in what he was saying, it seemed only natural, as would doubtless any other convulsion of nature, had it occurred. The next exclamation of the curate's caused Mrs. Islip as much emotion as the last, but this time it was astonishment, pure and simple, for he said:

"Oh, Miss Mettle, since the first time my eyes rested on your beautiful, noble figure my mind has been filled with the conviction that nature designed us for each other. May I——"

"Let go of my hand, sir!" Miss Mettle replied.

"Oh, I cannot, fairest one and dearest!" returned her admirer.

Mrs. Islip covered her face with her delicate lace pocket-handkerchief, and, laughing to herself, said:

“No calf for right-down, out-and-out calfiness like a love-ensnared calf!”

“You cannot mean that you wish me to give up all my hopes of happiness; to writhe in the clutches of a never-ending despair; to—to——”

The curate had no opportunity to finish his sentence, for, in trying to keep hold of Miss Mettle’s hand he caused the unstable contrivance he occupied to transgress the laws of gravity, and all such transgressions are bound to receive their just punishment, even if by that means, as in this case, a lover’s passionate pleadings have to be interrupted; or, sadder still, the type of a broadened Christianity overturned.

What added to the seriousness of the situation, Mrs. Trotlander, being in the corridor, looked over the hangings, and, beholding the intensely unsteady motions of her pet type and symbol of religious breadth in worship, hastened to see what was the trouble, and arrived just in time to be buried in the general wreckage along with the curate and Miss Mettle.

A great many unpleasant effects ensued from this untimely disaster besides the usual assortment of bruises and bumps and scratches and inward concussions and outward contusions, foremost among them being the dismissal of the curate.

Mrs. Trotlander called out for this, in the lulls between the twinges of pain caused by the lighting on her cranium of a choice bit of her precious minaret, type of the Greek form of worship. She called out, I repeat, for the curate’s dismissal as though she were a ravenous beast thirsting for blood. The breadth of thought which she so persistently cultivated did not extend in the direction of forgiveness of

injuries. She knew all about transmigration of souls and the various changes necessary for passing through the Hindoo states of purification, but of the true gospel change of heart she was as ignorant as though she had been born under a banyan tree and her youth passed amid hook-swinging, juggernaut-car driving and the many other broadening Buddhistical influences.

The rector yielded to Mrs. Trotlander's earnest solicitations, while at the same time he tried to induce her to strike off the Mohammedan from the list of ancient religions to be typified, inasmuch as so much shakiness was the result. But he could not get her to promise, for she feared that her standing in a theosophical society which she had just started would be disastrously affected thereby.

Mrs. Islip drove home holding her sides with laughter at the sight of the overthrow.

"That curate's got my money," she said to herself between the lulls in her merriment, "but he is welcome to it for the amusement he has afforded me. Ha, ha, ha! A grampus imprisoned in a carved snuff-box could not have wriggled and twisted more helplessly to get out, and Miss Mettle—she looked so deliciously mad! I think I will go over this afternoon and inquire after her injuries, though I know that wounded pride and vanity are her worst ills. Whoever else she may be engaged to it is *not* nor *will not* be Curate Baddicker. Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER XXI.

PECULIARITIES OF THE VOLUNTEER WORKER.

MR. K. ROUNDOUT GROUT's intention of seeing the three fair philanthropists soon after sending them his check was the best in the world, as I can testify, for, unfortunately, I was the only person visible to the naked eye when the gentleman visited the club rooms several times for that purpose.

The first time he came Miss Hopper was seated at a small table in the back of the long, elegant *suite* of rooms making out a form for a reward of merit card, a certain number of which would entitle their possessor to a handsome present and would indicate that she had been benefited by a certain amount of poetry and art. These presents would be paid for from the thousand dollars, which was *her* third of the gentleman's bequest.

I was seated near the door, and, looking up, was not surprised to have him regard me as a piece of furniture (and a miserable, cheap piece at that), it being his customary form of civility toward me. I noticed that his manner was even more arrogant and self-assertive than usual. He seemed to look around him with an air of proprietorship, stepping up to the mantelpiece and examining several of the choice bits of bric-à-brac as a person would do who was about to take complete possession. I continued my sewing, expecting every moment to hear him make some remark to Miss Hopper, when, to my surprise, he turned to me and said:

"I am astonished that none of the young ladies are here this morning, Mrs. Winn."

I looked around to where Miss Hopper had been seated, but a moment previously, and, sure enough, there was not a vestige or trace of her to be seen. I might have been led to believe that a supernatural agency had suddenly snatched her away had there not been a handsome Japanese screen near her former position, and from behind which a very faint rustling, gave me the assurance she had slipped. I therefore bowed my head and said:

"Would you like to leave any word for them?"

"You may say I have called and regretted not seeing them. At least, you may say I deeply regretted not seeing *Miss Mettle*; but I will call again."

This he did several times, but the young ladies formed the habit of locking the door when they came to stay, and when I went to open it they would disappear into closets or behind doors, leaving me to make the best of an embarrassing situation.

Miss Mettle about this time absented herself altogether from our midst. I wondered what could be the reason, and after a while I learned through Mrs. Thatcher. Affairs were in a most perplexing state at the Mission owing to Mr. Griffin's unreasonable anger against Mr. Bowman. The income from the endowment fund was stopped, and Rector Dunraven made an urgent appeal for volunteer workers to help Mrs. Thatcher.

After he had had a long conversation with Mrs. Mettle that lady said to her daughter the first chance she had to see her alone:

"Ray, I have promised Rector Dunraven that you would go to the Mission to-morrow."

"What for, pray?" returned her daughter, lifting her eyebrows in surprise.

"As a volunteer worker," returned Mrs. Mettle.

"Well, upon my word, mummy, I consider that very cool! Why didn't you offer to go yourself?"

"I *am* going, to chaperon you," exclaimed Mrs. Mettle, her little, bright black eyes snapping with excitement. "What are you laughing at, Ray?" she continued as her daughter gave expression to her feelings in a way to call forth that question. "I consider the present no time for foolish laughing and jesting. Did you know that Miss Nevins and her mother have already been acting as volunteer workers for several days? I consider that a very ominous sign."

"Who is afraid of Lena Nevins?" asked Miss Mettle contemptuously.

"That is just what you said about Belle Tenny when she began to play sweet on Bob Graham after you introduced them. I talked and talked, you will remember, and told you not to invite them both to the house so much; but you refused to listen, and the consequences were Belle Tenny bore him off triumphantly right before your face and eyes. And now you have annoyed dear, good Mr. Grout so much by not applying his donation to the end specified in his note that I greatly fear he intends to have us omitted from the list of invited guests at his mother-in-law's grand party, which I hear is to be the most magnificent affair of the season. That, of course, would be a slight we could not overlook, and would end everything as far as *he* is concerned; and then if Lena Nevins——" But Mrs. Mettle's composure would not admit of her finishing the sentence with its (to her mind) ghastly probabilities; instead, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Now, mummy, don't cry!" exclaimed her daughter, "you can temporize with Mr. Grout—tell him that calls

for benevolent assistance; or you might say a philanthropic undertaking in another field; or perhaps it would sound more impressive to assert that charity in the guise of a suppliant, but with the impelling power of a stern-browed Nemesis——”

“You need not expect *me* to orate in that style, Ray Mettle!” replied her mother, wiping her eyes. “I am going to begin and tell him the truth.”

“I wouldn’t if I were you, mummy. He is a man so unused to that vernacular, you would have to translate everything you said, and it might be embarrassing.”

In consequence of Rector Dunraven’s representations of the straitened condition of affairs at the Mission, the neighbors in the vicinity of that building had frequent cause to repair to their windows, the reason for this activity being the unusual sound of the jingling of gold and silver plated harness on horses connected with the dashing turnouts, in which the volunteer worker was borne to her field of labor. For these dear creatures belonged to the class who considered it ill-bred to go anywhere in a horse car, and, although they believed thoroughly in dancing all night, they thought a walk of five blocks overtaxed their nerves. To the question in the hymn:

*“Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?”*

they would have given an emphatic “Yes,” and protested that otherwise they could not *think* of going!

The morning the Mettles drove up to the Mission the weather was cloudy and forbidding, and there had occurred nothing of an exciting nature. The usual number of men soliciting in tones of voice more or less dulcet, “Rags! Bottles!” and those assuring all concerned that

they paid "Cash ol' clo'!" had passed along, but the first real event of any importance was the appearance of the Mettle establishment. The number of heads appearing and milk cans being overturned with the first crack of their coachman's whip moved that august functionary to repeat the process, until the houses opposite and far down the street blossomed out with human heads, which appeared to cause him the same satisfaction that a prima donna receives from blossoms sent over the footlights.

Lame Johnnie was sweeping the steps of the building, and when he stepped up to the ladies and asked them if they wanted to see Mrs. Thatcher, Mrs. Mettle said:

"Why, you poor boy, how lame you are! You must come right in here with me, and I'll put you to bed! That's just what I've come down here for—to take care of such little boys as you and put them to bed."

Lame Johnnie disappeared in a twinkling, and, running to Mrs. Thatcher, cried:

"Oh, Mamma Thatch, save me! Here is some one come down to put me to bed! Oh, you won't let them, will you?" And as he heard Mrs. Mettle's voice calling:

"Lame boy! lame boy!" he crawled under an old lounge, excitedly begging:

"Don't tell her where I am, will you, Mamma Thatch?"

Mrs. Thatcher sighed as she saw the last of Johnnie's shabby little feet disappear, for the boy was a great help, especially when there were volunteer workers to be waited on. She was beginning her second week with help from this source, and she did not think the change an improvement. But she greeted the two ladies with her cordial smile and ushered them into the main room, where the most of the children were playing.

It was as if sweet bells began suddenly to jangle out of tune, for the babies left their various plays and games, and,

running off into the farthest part of the room, some commenced to chatter in baby vernacular, while others were so overcome by their emotions that their baby lips curled up and loud wails rent the air.

Mrs. Thatcher was glad the sounds were so discordant that the newcomers could not understand the remarks of the older children, for Willie Crosby had his fists doubled up and kept repeating: "No, sir; no, sir; I s'an't take a drop of nussin 'cept Mamma Thatch gins it to me"; and sturdy Hans Ducklieber, a five-year-old German child, clasped both hands around his throat, saying: "Mein troat! Mein troat! It vas dat pads from vat de vimmins haf made me takes!" while Katie McGowey piped up in her Irish brogue: "Oh, Mamma Thatch, sure yez'll not be afther axin' me to let 'em 'speriment (experiment) on me agin, will yez, now?" But as if she were not sure, she ran for a closet, where she stood with the door open just far enough to show her bright eyes.

The explanation of these remarks and actions of the children was the fact that the previous volunteer workers, Mrs. and Miss Nevins, being unusually ailing women and accustomed to constant dosing, had insisted on having the children arranged in rows like little bottles and pouring into them certain concoctions of greater or less strength, according as the two ladies felt stronger or weaker.

"Hush, children!" said Mrs. Thatcher, "see how good you can be. These ladies have come here to help me take care of you."

"To be sure we have," replied Mrs. Mettle, beginning to untie her bonnet strings and take off her gloves, "and now I must get hold of that lame boy and put him to bed."

"Do you mean Lame Johnnie?" asked Willie Crosby, interested at once.

"He was here leetle times ago," said Hans, letting go his throat and brightening up at the prospect of a hunt.

"Ho!" returned Willie, "he can't stay hid from *me* long," leading the way into the back room, while Mrs. Thatcher shut the door into her own private room, where, underneath the lounge, was Johnnie's place of concealment. Mrs. Mettle was soon accompanied by all the available force of the nursery, and she made one think of the "Pied Piper" as she wandered around looking for the lame boy toward whom she cherished intentions of such a reposeful nature.

The search was not a successful one as far as finding the object for which it was instituted was concerned, but it *was* successful in furnishing Mrs. Mettle with data whereby she was able to acquaint Mrs. Thatcher with bits of information, which, from the impressive air she gave them, one would have thought entirely fresh and unheard of until she mentioned them. They were to the effect that the washtubs were worn out, that the kitchen range needed new lids on the top and doors at the side, that the brooms and brushes were beyond use, etc.

These valuable discoveries she followed by suggestions of equal importance, namely, that porcelain tubs were the best; soapstone might do to put in temporarily, but *she* would not think of having for permanent use anything beside porcelain.

Another thing she deemed of greatest importance was that children should be surrounded by evidences of order and cleanliness. She thought ashes on the hearth very objectionable and tended to give the young wrong ideas in regard to order, and when she was at home she always

folded up her aprons after using them; indeed, she had a certain place in a drawer where she placed them.

While Mrs. Mettle was engaged in rendering the valuable assistance above described, her daughter found time to exert her energies in straightening out the cribs; that is, by removing the wrinkles in the covering of the sleeping infants. In this process she awakened nearly every child, who, failing to appreciate the advantages of lying under smooth covering, began a lively remonstrance.

In the midst of this animated chorus the rector appeared. Mrs. Mettle, calling her daughter, sought the seclusion of Mrs. Thatcher's room, where, throwing herself down on the lounge underneath which Johnnie lay concealed, she exclaimed:

"Well, rector, no one knows until they try it, how *hard* it is to do benevolent work. Things go so contrary! There's that lame boy! I have not found him yet and put him to bed."

Johnnie, just beneath her, whispered softly to himself:

"Hope she won't, either."

"But, mummy," returned her daughter, "that is nothing to what it is to be caring for twenty babies and have them all wake up at once, as I did. Just hear them!"

They stopped a moment to listen—there were the cries from the mad baby, who, with doubled-up fist and reddened face, was entering its vigorous protest against being disturbed in the midst of a fine morning nap; there were the cries from the sad baby, more plaintive than forcible; there was the glad baby weeping from excess of emotion that there was anything to cry about. In the midst of the tumult came soothing tones, half lullaby, half remonstrance, in Mrs. Thatcher's sweet voice.

"I find Mrs. Thatcher quite a remarkable woman," said Miss Mettle.

"Ah!" returned the rector, "in what way?"

"I am sure she does not fold up her aprons, and I found ashes on the kitchen hearth," said Mrs. Mettle.

This unfavorable criticism of his precious Mamma Thatch almost brought the tears to Lame Johnnie's eyes, tucked away as he was under the sofa, and made his hand move nervously. It was not strange that Mrs. Mettle's little fat legs hanging so near made him think of a pin he had in his waistcoat.

"Why," returned Miss Mettle, "she is remarkable in this—she is an exceedingly fine-looking, attractive woman, yet she does not seem to have aspirations for social distinction or for changing her lot in any way; and she treats us, toward whom most women would have feelings, either of jealousy on the one hand, or of a fawning sycophant on the other, cordially and with dignity, as ladies from whom she expected nothing."

She did not add, as she might have done, that Mrs. Thatcher's expectations were seldom unfulfilled.

"I am sure it would be no recommendation to *me* to say of an unmarried or widowed person," replied Mrs. Mettle with decision, "that they had no aspirations for changing their lot. It is their business to *have* aspirations. If *they* do not *who* can sufficiently to accomplish anything? But I think she must leave something besides ashes on her hearth," and Mrs. Mettle moved her legs uneasily owing to the gentle pricks of Johnnie's pin.

"Oh, what an awful woman!" said Johnnie to himself, "to talk so about dear Mamma Thatch," and he administered a deeper, deadlier indentation.

"Ray, I think we must go home immediately!" exclaimed Mrs. Mettle, springing to her feet in great alarm. "I feel twinges of rheumatism worse than anything I ever felt before." And the little woman limped around like a

lame hen, hurrying her daughter by every means at her command, but never neglecting amid the general bustle to make definite plans with the rector for meeting him in the same place the following day.

There were several reasons why the rector was willing to accede to Mrs. Mettle's plans. There was first and foremost his desire to run the Mission as cheaply as possible. If there had not been danger of estranging a few people who had the poor taste to be interested in such an humble, unostentatious charity he would have closed the doors of the Mission entirely. For he himself was having built in the upper part of the city a large structure, the object of its erection being to carry on a form of philanthropy we will explain later on. This undertaking required a large outlay, and together with the necessary sum for the running expenses, including incense, tapers, flowers, etc., made a heavy drain on his resources.

He often looked at himself in the glass and wondered if there was another man on the face of the earth so hard up for money as himself. It was small wonder he was thin and scrawny and yellow. The sight had a tendency to shake his belief in the expediency of the doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy, on which topic he had written exhaustively in the verdancy of his early ministry. But now he had acknowledged to himself that affairs might reach such a pass that he would be *obliged* to marry. And if ever stern necessity laid such an alternative upon him (a prospect that always caused deep groans) he was resolved to be even with fate to the extent of marrying a woman with as great a fortune as possible.

Miss Mettle was a young lady that appeared to have as few of the average feminine weaknesses as any he had met, while her reputed wealth was fabulous. He therefore felt it incumbent upon him to humor her mother, and was in

waiting for the ladies at the Mission at the time specified. His greeting, as Mrs. Mettle heard it, was:

"Is it you, dear, at last?" But what the rector actually said was:

"Is it you *here* at last?"

He wondered what made Mrs. Mettle suddenly become so interested in a picture in the farther end of the room, where she stood some time with her back turned toward her daughter and himself, humming quite audibly, "In the gloaming, oh, my darling," and casting ever and anon little sheep's-eye glances out of her bright, black orbs of vision to see if it would quite do to intrude. She concluded that it would when she heard "girls' club" and "next managers' meeting."

As for Miss Mettle, she had not noticed what the rector said. It would not have made much difference if she had. She was an individual, as has been intimated, into whose composition no romance or sentimentality entered. She looked at the rector out of her steely-gray eyes, and she beheld a man. Society said you must marry men. She acquiesced. If society had commanded her to marry a bench she would have been just as well pleased. Society said you must marry men in as high a social scale as possible. In accordance with this mandate, if it could be done she was going to marry the rector; if not him, K. Roundout Grout; if not him, some one else.

Mrs. Mettle was much disturbed that her daughter should start in on the subject of "girls' clubs" when the rector was calling her "dear" and showing by that that he was ready to pursue more tender themes. Oh, if heaven had only been kind enough to give her a daughter with a little more tact, a little more sentiment, whom it would not have been *quite* such hard work to have married off! She would not have minded an ordinary amount of exer-

tion for a certain length of time, but to labor as she had labored for all these years, and then to be unrewarded—it was hard indeed!

“Ray, dear, I guess the rector does not care to hear about ‘girls’ clubs’ all the time. Suppose you tell him about the play we saw last evening,” Mrs. Mettle said, approaching her daughter as a little ruffled hen might have done, being distressed at the direction her one chicken was going and anxious to set it right.

“Now, mummy, before giving such advice, it would have been eminently proper for you to have ascertained who started the subject of the ‘girls’ clubs.’ For, as it was the rector himself, don’t you think it is rather a reflection on his choice of subjects?” asked Ray, blandly.

“I am sure, my dear, Rector Dunraven will not put any such construction on my remarks. He knows me better than to think I would do aught but honor him in word and deed,” explained Mrs. Mettle, blushing.

“Certainly, my dear madam, I understand you perfectly. *You* are, perhaps, at a loss to account for my very apparent interest in the ‘girls’ club’——”

“Not at all, rector, not at all,” interrupted Mrs. Mettle. “You are a stockholder in the concern, if I may be allowed the expression, drawing interest” (what the rector *longed* to be doing, but alas!) “and it is natural you should feel interested. But, to change the subject, Ray, dear, tell the rector about the play we saw last evening.”

The rector seconded this request, but Miss Mettle replied that she could not do the subject justice.

The play evidently had not made the impression on her that it had on her mother. *She* had better do the telling.

This was what Mrs. Mettle was only too willing to do, for she began without delay:

“Oh, it was such a *pretty* play! Such a *sweet* play!

Such a sweet, pretty play!" she exclaimed, fervently clasping her little fat hands over her breast, and rolling her eyes heavenward. "Its name was 'Love's Final Consummation,'" and she made an impressive pause, as if the mere words might have a magic effect and bring about what she so devoutly longed for; but that construction was somewhat interfered with by her daughter's saying coldly:

"Well, is that all you remember of it—just the title?"

She did not deign any reply but a sharp look and a sort of involuntary feeling around after her daughter's toe to step on, failing in which she changed her seat so that she might accomplish this indispensable admonition if further occasion required, and continued:

"When the curtain rose there were the dearest little trees, and the cunningest big mountains, and the cutest rocks, with lovely looking-glass lakes, and, in the midst, a man—oh, such a natty looking man!—in a pea-green coat with yellow knee breeches and silver buckles on his shoes, and he was looking all around for his love. I could not help thinking how true that was of so many men! They spend so much of their lives looking around for their loves, you would almost think——"

"Supposing you do not stop to moralize, mummy. There is not time," interposed the daughter.

"You interrupted me in the midst of a sentence, Ray, and that I cannot have. You would almost think they were blind, there are so many loves on every hand, and yet the men do not seem to have the goodness to see them. This man's name in the play was Honourous Trevellyan, and time and again he would be on one side of a tree trunk and his love on the other, and he would be wailing out about how much he wanted to find *her* and could not."

"It is just as well he didn't find her at those times," in-

interrupted Miss Mettle, "for she looked like a fright, and the colors in her costume would have been very trying if placed too near his."

"Do you think love can be quenched by inharmonious colors, Miss Mettle?" asked the rector.

"Oh, certainly not, my dear rector," interposed Mrs. Mettle before her daughter could answer, joy beaming from every feature. "My daughter has too much sense. It is the Koran, isn't it, which says: 'Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it'?"

"Koran!" exclaimed her daughter, contemptuously, recognizing her mother's artful method of endeavoring to impress the rector with the fact that she was widely read. "It seems to me that I should have quoted something besides the Bible to the rector and palmed it off for the Koran!"

"You mean you would have quoted something besides Shakespeare, do you not?" interposed the rector. "I think that quotation is taken from the mouth of Rosalind in the forest of Arden, as she is soliloquizing mournfully but eloquently on her love for Orlando."

"There now, Ray! You see how useless it is for *you* to set yourself up as authority. I think I *meant* Shakespeare instead of the Koran. There is a wonderful similarity between the two in my mind," and the expression of ten little owls boiled down into one appeared on Mrs. Mettle's plump features.

"The only similarity between the two that occurs to me," remarked the daughter, undutifully, "is that you know as little about the one as you do about the other." This she said while turning over the leaves of a Bible. Finally coming to the eighth chapter of Solomon's Songs and the seventh verse, she handed it to her mother, with her finger at the place, saying: "There's your quotation."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the rector, coughing in an embarrassed way.

"Oh, never mind!" interposed Mrs. Mettle, "it is very likely Rosy said the same thing, where you said, and even if she did not say it, it is more than likely she thought it, as I have a great many times, only I'm not such a chatterbox as to say all I think wherever I happen to be." Noticing that the rector's face still wore traces of chagrin at his mistaken judgment in regard to the quotation, she added:

"You can make it all right by preaching on that text. That will impress it so deeply on your mind that you will always remember where it is taken from."

"True, so I can," replied the rector, reflectively, feeling around after the few stray hairs that composed his mustache. "It will not be my turn to preach from a text of Scripture for some time yet, as you have probably noticed my themes are chosen from various authors. You remember, if you were out last Sabbath, that I preached upon 'That Over-soul, that Unity within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other,' Emerson's favorite topic. But if it would please you I will make an exception and preach from a Bible text—say a week from the coming Sabbath."

"Yes, indeed, that would be entirely satisfactory!" exclaimed Mrs. Mettle, "and I will try to be present. I am greatly distressed that both my daughter and myself should have missed the discourse you mention. Unity! unity! Oh, what a rapturous theme! And put into practice by two loving hearts—what bliss!—what—what——"

Further remark was interrupted at this juncture by a crash and a bang that brought the rector and his two companions to their feet with affright. The cause was

found to be the upsetting of a tower of Babel, erected by the children while left to themselves.

Mrs. Thatcher, in her desire to do her work up more thoroughly, so that the inspection of her volunteer workers should not find even ashes on the hearth or unfolded aprons, had been kept in another room. Lame Johnnie and Sally, a half-witted girl, were given the reins of government. But Willie Crosby and Hans Ducklieber, with a few other restless spirits, were not inclined to respond to rulers and governors whose age and station were so nearly contemporaneous with their own.

"What you talkin' about, Johnnie!" exclaimed Willie Crosby. "Mamma Thatch won't care! Ain't the tower of Babel in the Bible, 'n course she'll like us to make what's in the Bible!"

So the wise counsel had been rejected, the chairs had been brought together to construct a modern tower. It had attained a goodly height, when Hans Ducklieber insisted:

"I vill pe goings up vid de breecks und mortar myself. Why shall leetle Katies be sent, und she too leetle to do nottings?"

Hans had made the ascent once, and was mounting the second time, when he stumbled, slipped and caught at a chair, which proved to be brick and mortar of an exceedingly unstable and insecure variety. In consequence, he fell headlong, not on the outside of the round ring of chairs, but in the center, and drew a number down on top of him.

Mrs. Mettle's appearance on the scene of disaster was the signal for Lame Johnnie to disappear, which left Hans without the encouragement of his cheerful words. This caused the German to bellow louder than a brace of lusty bulls of Bashan.

"Stop your noise!" cried Mrs. Mettle, nervously, peering in at the boy with his close environment of chairs three

deep all round him. "If I could get hold of you I'd make you stop!" she muttered, crossly.

In lieu of her inability to reach the German she shook several of the inoffending children within reach, making them increase the volume of sound instead of diminishing it.

The rector removed the environment after handling a great many chairs, and Hans came out covered with bumps and bruises.

"Now go to some one and let them wash and put you to bed," cried Mrs. Mettle, "and the rest of you children, what are you crying for?"

"'Coz it's not the loikes of us as enjiys bein' shaked," said Katie McGowey, between her sobs.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. ELIJAH BOWMAN DISMISSES THE VOLUNTEER WORKER.

"WELL, whom have you had here to help you to-day?" This question Mr. Elijah Bowman asked of Mrs. Thatcher. He had formed the habit of dropping in, only occasionally he thought, but since the help had been reduced and Mrs. Thatcher had been obliged to depend on volunteer workers, which made her burdens so much heavier, his calls had become so frequent as to occur nearly every day. And the strange part of it was, he never grumbled at having to call so frequently. Although he was a plain, quiet man, who enjoyed coming home from his business and after his evening meal putting on his slippers and dozing over his newspapers, still he changed these habits without a murmur. He was even heard to whistle on his way downstairs out into the street.

"You don't mean to tell me you have had the same mother and daughter here who woke up all the babies and then left you to get them to sleep?"

Mrs. Thatcher sighed in reply, and by the light which she had purposely turned down Mr. Bowman could distinguish that her cheeks were very pale.

"Now, this thing has got to be stopped," said Mr. Bowman, emphatically.

"Don't say that!" replied Mrs. Thatcher, with trembling voice. "I could not bear it after all the years I have labored for its prosperity and when I *know* it is so much needed."

"The volunteer worker I referred to, *not* the Mission," replied Mr. Bowman.

They both laughed at this, and she said:

"I do not want to be unkind, neither do I wish to cherish unkindness in my heart, but in my experience I must confess that the volunteer worker has been somewhat of a failure. I presume the fault has been mine, and——"

"Yes, I think it has been yours, and I think the only kind of a person who could hope to make them a success would be some one with the capabilities of the old-time plantation slave overseer, with his long whip and loud voice," said Mr. Bowman. "For every volunteer worker with whom *I* have been associated never expected to do anything but direct and suggest and manage, and that without any previous knowledge of the subject in hand. It's like having an army composed entirely of ignorant generals, each one busy in issuing orders and commands. Have you had any other calls to-day?"

"Yes, I have, and a strange one, too," answered Mrs. Thatcher. "I am glad you asked the question, for I should have been sorry to have forgotten to tell you about it. A lady clad in garments of exquisite soft shades, her blonde hair surmounted by a dainty bonnet, with an odor from Araby's isle around her and holding the hand of a beautiful boy, presented herself and asked for me. She said: 'Mrs. Thatcher, it has always been a fancy of mine that I should like to see some interesting poor families and observe how they live. Occasionally, but only very occasionally, you come across individuals in the upper part of the city who maintain a certain picturesqueness in their poverty. But that is not like seeing a family together. I thought it would be such a novel experience to go into homes where not only they *were* poor, but where they *looked* poor. Of course, I mean to give them something

for allowing me the gratification.' I thought several moments, as I am used to having ladies come to me with all sorts of absurd requests in regard to the poor; but the desire to obtain amusement by the sight of picturesque poverty was a call that had not been made upon me before."

"By George! if a man does not hear of queer and still queerer people every day he lives! Now, I will tell you who that sounds like—Silas Islip's wife," said Mr. Bowman.

"That is just exactly who it was," replied Mrs. Thatcher, "and I wrote down the names of six very poor families, gave Mrs. Islip in charge of a woman who had come to help me for a few hours, and sent the lady out to gain her desired gratification. In a much shorter time than I expected the two returned, and Mrs. Islip explained:

"We did not go to all those families, because from the three we *did* visit I saw you had not grasped my meaning.'

"But those were all very poor people,' I said. 'The first family was that of a mother left a widow with seven children, and the eldest only twelve, and she keeps them altogether.'

"Oh, yes, that may be,' laughed Mrs. Islip, brightly, 'but her room was just as clean as my kitchen, with the window panes so you could see through them, and the plates and pans set on the dresser just as evenly as though she had something to put on them occasionally.'

"Well, how about the other homes? That aged couple, the second on the list, often have only one meal a day, and that a bowl of oatmeal porridge that I send in at the end of our supper.'

"But there was nothing "gaunt," "hollow-eyed" or "wolfish-looking" about them,' returned Mrs. Islip, merrily. 'I took up the old lady's hand on purpose to see if it was "skinny" and would remind me of a "bird's claw."

But it did not in the least. It looked like an ordinarily wrinkled old lady's hand. Moreover, I should never think of aiding or abetting a couple who seemed determined to impose on you the way that couple did.'

"'Why, how do you mean?' I asked, looking startled. 'I have always thought them thoroughly honest.'

"'You need not tell me they are honest,' returned Mrs. Islip, 'at all events, in this particular. They try to make out they are fond of each other, ha, ha, ha! Yes, actually fond of each other!' and Mrs. Islip gave way to a prolonged laughing fit. 'Lived together for over fifty years, and fond of each other! That's *all* I want to know about them! No such impostors as that need expect to receive any countenance from me. And now, my good woman, if you can think of no other families where the kind of poverty exists which would be both interesting and picturesque I shall have to go home without accomplishing my desire.'

"A policeman standing in the hall overheard this last remark of Mrs. Islip's, and, beckoning me aside, said that he knew a locality where existed a state of affairs which he thought would suit the lady exactly, and, if agreeable, he would conduct her thither, provided she would consent to leave her jewelry with me. Mrs. Islip was enthusiastic.

"'Oh, my good man,' she said, 'I will reward you generously if I find I have not been mistaken in you.'

"Mrs. Islip left not only her jewels, but her grandson, who was taken to play with the day nurslings. Seeing a couple nearly his own size, he cried:

"'Oh, des sink (think)! Now I can have two horses to drive!'

"And how he did drive them. After he was tired of that pastime he proceeded to marshal all the available material of the nursery, which consisted of toddlers and their older brothers and sisters, only omitting the infants,

into lines for a procession, and constituted himself commander-in-chief, drummer, bugler and standard-bearer—yes, and I might add, general chastiser—for if any of his troops lagged behind or asked to be allowed to do anything they were told they would have every bone in their body broken and were rapped beside. The nursery was in a grand uproar, and I was considering what was best to be done with the young disturber of the general peace, when the ringing of the bell announced the return of his grandmother. In coming down the stairs I heard her saying to the policeman:

“‘There, my good fellow, there is twenty-five dollars for the trouble you have been to and the pleasure you have afforded me. In all New York city you could not have shown me anything more to my mind. Ha, ha, ha! Mrs. Thatcher, I do not wonder you look surprised. I presume my bonnet looks a little battered and my hair dishevelled, but, dear me, that’s nothing. I have seen what I have wanted to so long,—*poor* people who *looked* poor! We went to a room where the walls were black with the filth of years. Twenty or twenty-five people live there altogether, and I should have said they were almost all in, betting and swearing over a party who were playing cards. When they saw the policeman some were inclined to slink away, and the policeman said afterward those were some of the most accomplished pickpockets in the world. The children—oh, ho! ho! ho!—you should have seen the children! Any one of them would have done for an anatomical specimen in a medical college, only they would have to have had more clothing on. When one side of the card players won the other side looked so delightfully fierce and savage that I could not forbear throwing them a five-dollar gold piece, and then you would have laughed your sides sore (as I did) to see the scrambling

and scratching to get it. I was so sorry I only had twelve pieces to throw, for I could have stood there *hours* and watched them—snarling and acting like ravening wolves. But when I stopped throwing the money they began throwing things at me, and that is what is the matter with my bonnet and hair. They would not believe but I had more gold pieces about me, and if it had not been for the policeman I should probably have been torn to pieces. Ha, ha, ha! Would not that have been a joke?" "

"I hope you assured her you thought it would have been altogether too *good* a joke to be true?" said Mr. Bowman.

"Hush-sh-sh! you don't mean anything as bad as that," said Mrs. Thatcher.

"Don't I though; don't I? Such frivolous good-for-nothing women make me mean as bad as that and a good deal worse. I suppose she had saved something to give you for the Mission, though money from such a source carries little good with it!" exclaimed Mr. Bowman.

"Just as she was putting the finishing touches to her bonnet and veil she stopped short and said: 'There! how very careless of me! I meant to have saved one of those gold pieces to give to you, but in my excitement I forgot and gave them all away! Oh, well, they were all given to the poor. I have *that* virtuous reflection to console myself withal,' and she laughed as contentedly as though she were Florence Nightingale returning from viewing an hospital full of saved patients. Then she called, 'Son! Son!' to summon her little grandchild. But he had been having such a fine time he had gone and hidden away, and she turned to leave, saying: 'Oh, well, you are a trustworthy-looking body; I shan't mind if he stays here with you a while.'"

"Did you ever hear such abominable presumption!" ex-

claimed Mr. Bowman, slapping his knee. "I hope you gave her a piece of your mind! I wish *I'd* been here."

"No; I only said: 'Wait a minute,' and I disappeared to institute a more thorough search, for I *did* think my present cares and responsibilities sufficient without adding to them. The result was, I discovered a peculiar variety of grocery in the storeroom closet—something done up in silk and velvet, with a bunch of beautiful curls at one end and at the other a pair of heels which began to move in a very lively manner when the bundle was taken up preparatory to its removal, while a voice said: 'I s'an't go home wiz Mummer Islip! I s'an't go home. S'e *never* lets me drive her; and Papa Grout, he hates (hurts) me jess awful! I *muss* stay wiz Willie and Johnnie 'n so's to march the nuss'y.' "

"'March the nuss'ry,' the little beggar! It doubtless would be better for him if he was made to march a straight line himself. I suppose the lad has a somewhat erratic bringing up, between his selfish, devil-may-care father, his mercenary grandfather and frivolous granddame," commented Mr. Bowman.

"Poor little fellow, I pity him!" said Mrs. Thatcher.

"Yes, he *is* to be pitied!" exclaimed Mr. Bowman, while his fingers began to beat a tattoo on the table by his side, showing that his mind was busily engaged with a subject foreign to the one he had been conversing upon. Finally he said:

"It has got to be done! You *must* have your two girls back again. And I have come to the conclusion to be responsible for their wages as well as for notifying the volunteer worker that the valuable services she has been rendering down here will be required no longer. I shall take solid comfort in communicating to that effect with the Nevins and the Mettles, only I shall have to exercise great

control not to add that if I catch them here it will be worse for them than being caught in a powder magazine with a lighted fuse."

"Ah! but dear Mr. Bowman," returned Mrs. Thatcher earnestly, "with all the rest you are doing for us I am afraid this will be too much."

Mrs. Thatcher said this running down the hall after Mr. Bowman.

"Bah!" said that gentleman, stopping at the front door with the knob in his hand, "don't talk such foolishness as that to me! Don't you suppose it is worth more to be called what you just called me than anything I have done or can do?" and he drew the door together after him so as not to allow any more thanks to be spoken.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUBJECTS THAT INTEREST YOUNG LADY MANAGERS.

"Is it unreasonable, I ask?" Miss Denny, assuming a tragic air, demanded of some young ladies who were assisting her in the final touches for her first great entertainment after Mr. Grout's three-thousand-dollar subscription. "Is it unreasonable or at all unwise," she repeated, "that people with benevolence in their hearts toward their fellow men should be furnished with the means to carry out their good intentions?" Nobody answering, she continued:

"It is *not* unreasonable nor unwise, and Ray Mettle may eschew my society if she pleases and Annie Hopper look glum and lowering. I am going to do what I think is right in the matter."

The evening for which so much preparation had been made proved a stormy one. The rain came down in torrents, the wind was blowing, and it was the kind of a night when every one who had a roof to cover them ought to have remained discreetly beneath it. But first and foremost among the gay revellers was Biddy O'Monahan, resplendent in her bright yellow satin gown; at least it must have been resplendent when she left home, but the drippings from her black cotton umbrella had not improved it. That was a matter, however, which did not trouble Biddy, and she remarked to Maggie Flynn, who called her attention to the dark streaks:

"Faith, thin, it is not me that cares fur the loikes of thet! Streaked, be's it? Stripes wuz allers afther my

stoile! I'd rather it wuz thet way thin like yer gown—all limp and wet."

Maggie Flynn's mother had made up the white-and-pink striped silk party dress which Miss Mettle had given her and bought some organdie for an over-dress, but she had been too poor to purchase an umbrella, and therefore Maggie looked as though the best place for her after being passed through a wringer was over a clothes-line. Maggie was not any more inclined to feel downcast than Biddy. She gave her organdie over-skirt a squeeze front and back, thereby making it look as though she had an unconventional drapery of washrags. But although the water and mud was oozing from their shoes, they began to step around to see if they had lost any of their recently acquired knowledge of dancing and to tell where they were going to stand for the first quadrille, and, as both of them wanted the same place, they grew animated at once.

Sounds of weeping soon attracted us, and the cause of these sounds appeared in a girl attired in a lavender gauze who had slipped midway on a crossing, making the spectacle she presented one to draw pity and laughter from the bystanders. I took her to my room. There I found that with all the gauze and cheap silk and brass jewelry on the outside, her underclothes were in a lamentably deficient condition. Moreover, she was frightfully dirty, not only from the soil of the crossing, but from months of undisturbed accumulations. I thought a minute. Could I let such a dirty creature use my clean private bath? Yes, for the sake of the uplifting effect of cleanliness I would sacrifice my feelings, and I said:

"There, dear, now you may go into my tub and have a good wash."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Winn," the girl answered, "I'm afraid I'd lose a dance."

I took out my watch and assured her there was plenty of time and that I would see the dancing did not commence before she was ready. Moreover, I said:

"If you will take a bath I will furnish you with an entire set of underclothes, and give you a change to carry home."

"I'm sure, dear Mrs. Winn, I'd like to oblige you, but really I'm afraid I'd catch cold."

"Nonsense," I replied. "Bathing is the best preventive in the world *against* catching cold."

"I wish I could be sure of that and I'd take it in a minute, but my little brother took a bath, and he died the next day," replied the girl, working over her lavender gauze dress.

"Well, your brother was probably sick when he took his bath," I persisted.

"Yes, he had newmony (pneumonia), and mother heard bathing was good, and she held him under the faucet, and—and—he died."

"Well, you are not sick, so you need not be afraid, and I will give you a quarter if you will do as I want to have you."

Still the girl hesitated. But I was determined that she should not leave my room in the dreadful state in which she was, so I increased my money inducements till I reached two dollars, then two and a half. At this point she said:

"Really, dear Mrs. Winn, you are so anxious that I guess I will take my life in my hand and do as you want to have me. You wouldn't mind giving me the underclothes, too, would you?"

"Oh, no," I replied, "I meant to give them to you, and I will spend the two dollars and a half for stockings and flannel petticoats. You will have a nice outfit."

The girl gave a little good-natured scream.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Winn, I could not afford to spend so much for underclothes. If you give me two sets that will be more than I've had for years; and I must use that two dollars and a half for a lace jacket—real thread, you know. I need it so much. When I take off my winter coat I have nothing for spring and summer wear."

I drew a long, discouraged sigh as the girl kept up her silly prattle. I wished fervently that I had not had on my best clothes. I would have enjoyed scrubbing her down better than doing anything else I could think of. I felt confident if I left her to take the ablution alone it would be only half done, so I called Mary Hogan, a big, stout woman who swept and cleaned every week. It needed only a few words to rouse in this good woman's dirt-aborring soul a desire as fierce as my own to get hold of that girl and see that she was thoroughly washed for once in her life. I shut the two in the bathroom, and after sounds of splashings and squealings and scrubbings and gruntings in Mary Hogan's lowest bass, sometimes in token of despair and anon of satisfaction, they issued forth, the girl shining like a new sixpence and Mary triumphant, saying:

"Shure, faith! I thought onct it could never be did! But it's meeself as is the best hand at scrubbin' ary one could get, if I *do* say it, who shouldn't! Only, next time, I'll be afther remimberin' to *begin* with sandsoap instid of waiting to see if t'other kind would do fust."

At the conclusion of the bath, when Clementine Flutter and I came out together, we found a great many of the young lady managers had arrived, as well as a great many of the girls. I had noticed a similarity between the two in this respect. There were sure to be more present the evenings when it was known that refreshments were to be

served. They reminded me of the class of persons Cato describes, "whose palates have quicker sensations than their hearts."

The young lady managers were present in full evening dress of every degree of magnificence, and they stood around in small groups talking together. Other evenings, when at the opera, theatre, concert or party, it would be their custom to notice each other's dresses or the costumes of Mesdames X., Y. and Z. as they entered. They would also be very sharp to comment on the fact that Mrs. Dr. Snooks came with a gentleman not her husband, and hard upon this comment one of them might piously hope it was not a sign that a coldness was springing up between husband and wife, which would result in a scandal. And this pious hope would be repeated as an incontrovertible and established fact by another a little later in the evening. Dear reader, has it ever happened to be your fortune to sit near any of these gay fashionables at an evening's entertainment? If so, I am sure you must remember with what rapture you listened to their discourse on the impropriety of Mrs. Jupiter Jumpup's wearing stripes going the wrong way of the cloth! How you shuddered at the thought that *you* might have committed this heinous sin if your attention had not been called to this same Mrs. Jupiter Jumpup, who, by the way, sitting in a tier of boxes but little removed from you, added greatly to your disturbed state of mind by revealing the fact that she made the stripes go in so many different ways in her costume that you could not detect which way the right or the wrong was. Then, can you not recollect how you have been thrilled by the discussion of Mrs. Leander Noodle's age? One will say:

"She gives it out that she is thirty-five."

"Bah! she is past forty if she is a day," a second will add.

"Forty! why, she looks fifty to me!" exclaims a third.

"But she cannot be that age," remarks number one, "because my oldest sister was in her set."

"Well, what is your sister's age?" inquires number two.

"She was thirty-two last March," promptly replies number one.

"Thirty-two, do you say?" inquires number three; "well, then she has been growing younger for the past five years, for at that time she and my husband were thirty-seven within a few days of each other."

At this juncture number one nearly chokes with rage and calls number three an "impertinent huzzy," and talks so loud and makes such a disturbance that the long-suffering public, who are not "gay fashionables," and who, therefore, have good breeding and manners sufficient to abstain from talking from beginning to end of an entertainment—this long-suffering public, upon whom the "gay fashionables" look down with ineffable scorn, probably for one reason that they *are* so long suffering—finally asserts itself in a hiss which enables it to distinguish between what comes from the stage and what comes from the surrounding "gay fashionables," though if you think that any human agency could devise a plan whereby the "gay fashionables" could be induced even for one evening to forego its tendency to emulate the chattering magpie, it shows what a good, clever person you are, and how charitably inclined.

But on this evening the young lady managers standing around in groups did not have Mrs. Jupiter Jumpup or Mrs. Leander Noodle to discuss, so perforce they were obliged to attempt subjects nearer home, and they found them right to their mind in the girls' costumes.

"Here, you!" called Miss Mettle to Maggie Flynn, "how does it happen that you've made up that gown I gave you so that it looks so dowdy?"

"Dowdy? Dowdy? My dress dowdy!" exclaimed Maggie Flynn. Her bright black eyes clouded for a moment. "Shure, yees *must* be mistaken. Ma sid it wuz nate, but not gorgeous. I got it a leetle meyst (moist) on the way here through the rain a-fallin' on't."

"I should say you had got it a little moist!" replied Miss Mettle. "And then you wrung it out like a towel. You ought to know better than that."

"So I told her," broke in Biddy O'Monahan, overjoyed at an opportunity of finding fault with her rival.

"Oh, you did, eh?" replied Miss Mettle, giving Biddy a frigid stare, "and who may *you* be?"

"Please, ma'am, my name is Biddy O'Monahan."

"Well, Biddy, who gave *you* your gown?" asked Miss Mettle with critical condescension.

"Please, ma'am, it wuzn't guv; it wuz buyed," turning round with great pride to display all its beauties.

"Well, Biddy, there's a rip in the back to begin with," returned Miss Mettle.

"And you want to tell your mother that the color is not bright enough," broke in Miss Denny, looking around and winking at some of the young lady managers, who thereupon snickered audibly.

"Please, ma'am, 'twuz the brightest she could git, and she wud have bin afther a-havin' of it brighter like, ef she cud."

"Do you remember my lavender gauze, girls?" asked Miss Rounds, as she caught sight of Clementine Flutter. "Here it is," and she took hold of Clementine by the shoulder and whirled her around as though she had been a dummy. "There; do you see that spot? It don't show

much. There's where Tom Morgan spilt a cup of coffee on me. And there's a little tear around on the other side," and Clementine was twisted around forthwith. "That's where I caught the dress on a rose bush in Mrs. Norcross's conservatory when Tom proposed to me."

"Well, I must say it's discouraging!" exclaimed another of the managers. "I never would have supposed any dress of mine would have met such a dreadful fate! Just see that blue dress that girl has on over by the piano! She's gone and trimmed it with the brightest, most screeching purple!"

She referred to Lena Deckenbachschmitt, who had on a broad, complaisant smile as she looked around and bobbed and curtsied to every one.

There seemed to be deep enjoyment to the managers in these critical observations and comments on their cast-off finery. Undoubtedly they were moved by the reflection that only when there was magnanimous benevolence such as theirs could there be equal satisfaction.

"Hullo! this girl has snapping black eyes, hasn't she?" and one of the managers touched Adele Veaux on the shoulder and turned up her chin to look at her orbs of vision, very much as though she were a dog to be purchased. Instantly the clouds of discontent that had been gathering on Adele's brow, through fear that she was to be overlooked, vanished. She was radiant with smiles.

"Oh, ze mademoiselle ze is too good to ze pauvre Adele," she murmured.

"That bow of ribbon doesn't stand up high enough on your head, girl," returned the manager.

"Non?" asked Adele, eagerly. "Zen I conducts it off so!" and the French girl in her haste to remove the ribbon, unloosened her hair. Without the French girl's seeing her the manager picked up her hairpins and said:

"Hurry and put your hair up or Miss Mettle will not like it!"

Miss Mettle added to the girl's confusion by calling out:

"Adele, I am astonished at you!"

"Oh, ze pauvre fille!" exclaimed Adele, looking around and around after the missing hairpins, which the manager thought was such a good joke to secrete that she let several of her friends see how witty she could be.

Urged on by this little pleasantry, the malt-broker's daughter, Leonora Bullwinkle, thought she discovered in the dark-browed Mary Sharkey subject matter for further jest. Leonora was not a handsome girl. She represented too many generations of livers soaked in lager beer for that. And however much this beverage may improve the health and increase the strength, as its friends insist, they cannot claim for it any enhancement of personal charms nor any sharpening of the intellectual faculties. Leonora was a notable illustration in point. She had a decidedly barrel-like figure, in spite of all her efforts to remove the likeness. Her head was set on her shoulders by means of a neck which would be proof against the fiercest wind that might attempt to blow them asunder. She had one too many chins, and her eyes had a cast in them which caused one to look away from the other—wall-eyed, some people called her. This did not show as much when her eyes were in any other position than raised heavenward, but as this was a favorite direction for her to gaze she made the defect very apparent. She had an abundance of long, coarse red hair, of which she was very proud, and to its arrangement she gave a great deal of time and thought. Usually she appeared with it braided like a coronet over her low, receding forehead and a glittering star of diamonds or other ornaments that shook and quivered in the

sunlight fastened in front. She delighted in a tragic air—in a princess-in-disguise manner—which was somewhat interfered with by a thickness of speech ordinarily associated with the inebriate.

She advanced toward Mary Sharkey, which was of itself sufficient proof of her lack of perceptive power, for one glance at Mary would have convinced most people that she was not a person to be trifled with, but Leonora, unable to distinguish between the weak toady, Adele Veaux, and the dark-browed girl before her, said with what was intended to be an impressive gesture:

“And you, too, need to find some other way of arranging your hair.”

Mary’s reply was to mimic in an exaggerated manner Miss Bullwinkle’s gesture and thick utterance, as she said:

“And you, too, need to find some other person to show off before.”

Miss Bullwinkle grew very red, and her utterance still more thick under the laughter excited by Mary’s reply.

“I never heard such impudence! I don’t see what there is in it to laugh at!”

“You don’t!” replied Mary, still imitating Miss Bullwinkle. “Well, all you want to do to get something to laugh at is to get before a looking-glass, and then you’d jest double over at yourself, as I am at you,” and Mary proceeded to reel around like a person exploding with mirth.

“I won’t have it!” exclaimed Miss Bullwinkle, passionately; “I won’t be insulted in such a public manner without finding some means of redress! I shall have the police take that girl out of here!”

She said this latter to some of the managers, who replied in a whispered aside:

“Oh, mercy! don’t say anything to the police! That girl has the right side of them in some way, and if you

complain of her we shall all be ordered off to Delmonico's again. You shouldn't have tackled her in the first place."

"I like that!" exclaimed Miss Bullwinkle, "blaming me for her impudence, when I was only trying to improve her personal appearance. You are a bad, wicked girl!" turning to Mary. "You deserve a good beating; and you only get part of your deserts when I give you this," referring to a sound box that she would have administered to Mary's ear had that ear not been removed too quickly.

"There's my return thanks!" exclaimed Mary, giving a resounding slap on Leonora Bullwinkle's fat, bare neck and jerking a bow with long ends from the back of her dress and brandishing it around her head.

"Come on, now, yous that's after wanting to rearrange my hair, or alter the gathers in my gown, or give me p'int on colors, or tell what all's happened to the gown you guv me. Now's your chance! Come on! Step right up here!" she continued, waving the ribbons and advancing toward Leonora Bullwinkle, who retreated step by step and looked as though she was choking with rage.

"Don't all speak t' onct!" added Mary, as a solemn stillness seemed to be taking the place of the invited criticism.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from Mrs. Islip, entering the room at this moment. "The *best* scenes are not to be had at the theatres by any means, are they?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RARE LECTURE.

BESIDES the difficulties already considered, our three fair friends had others for whose solution they were obliged to use all the ingenuity and sagacity at their command.

For instance, the morning Miss Mettle appeared at the club after her temporary absence as volunteer worker and found Miss Hopper pacing back and forth excitedly before Miss Denny. The light and airy demeanor of the latter was considerably subdued, and she was gloomily partaking of a bag of peanuts and scattering the shells anywhere and everywhere she happened to move, in order, doubtless, to provide me (Mrs. Winn) with something to do.

From my room I had been hearing the conversation between the two, previous to Miss Mettle's entrance. It had consisted for some time of a monologue by Miss Hopper, who was rehearsing the various incidents in connection with the gift of three thousand dollars (with which the reader is already familiar), and had continued uninterruptedly until she made the statement:

"And now, after misapplying that money, you have given one entertainment, and have enough funds left for a few more, but nothing else to show for it!"

"Nothing else to show for it, indeed, Annie Hopper!" Miss Denny replied. "What else do I want? I guess if you could have had as successful an entertainment to show for all your rewards of merit cards, chromos, lectures, recitations and things you'd be glad. Don't you think it is

something to be able to say you've had the best music in the city, all the flowers you wanted, and a supper the lord high chancellor of England need not be ashamed to sit down to? Another thing I want to ask you is, *how* are we to be benevolent and perform deeds of charity and try and elevate the masses without money? We *must* have money and *plenty* of it. I have heard money called a lever—now you cannot take a toothpick as a lever to move a mountain and expect to have any good results."

"That may be; but we must get our money in the right way. Not when a man gives us money for one thing to apply it to something else," said Miss Hopper.

"You need not preach to *me*, Annie Hopper!" exclaimed Miss Denny. "I am as good a financier as *you* any day, besides being a great deal more popular!"

"Bah! popular! *Who* wants to be popular?" returned Miss Hopper. "Any circus clown can be that! And look at your popularity; what it brings about!"

"It may not be due to *that* that we have not been invited to Mrs. Islip's ball. Our invitations may come yet," said Miss Denny, though the tone in which she made the remark was not as hopeful as her words might imply.

"Well, Belle Rounds showed me her invitation several days ago," returned Miss Hopper, "and the time is drawing on very close."

"I wonder if Ray Mettle has received hers!" said Miss Denny, solemnly.

The door opening at that moment to admit the person just mentioned, the question was put to her. Miss Mettle, however, shook her head in a decided negative, while she added:

"Leonora Bullwinkle has been invited, and she almost cried with joy when she showed me her invitation as well as when she learned I had not received any."

"Why did you let her know?" asked both Miss Hopper and Miss Denny in the same breath.

"It came out before I thought," returned Miss Mettle.

"Now, you see what you've done, Grace Denny! I am——" but Miss Hopper could not finish. Her emotions overcame her and she sobbed aloud.

An hour of solemn deliberation followed. One plan after another was suggested, deliberated upon and abandoned, but there stood the twin nightmares of Miss Rounds' and Leonora Bullwinkle's invitations to urge them on to fresh effort.

"It would not be so bad to think of Belle Rounds's going when we did not!" exclaimed Miss Hopper, "because she's in our set, but to think of any one *below* us going, like Leonora Bullwinkle—that is insupportable!" and she wrung her hands as she paced.

"I've thought of a plan!" exclaimed Miss Mettle at length. The three fair philanthropists drew close together, and Miss Denny and Miss Hopper almost held their breath in their eagerness to hear.

"We will ask Mrs. Islip to deliver a lecture to our girls' club!"

"Oh, that is a *splendid* idea!" exclaimed Miss Denny.

"Let us have her to-night," said Miss Hopper.

"With no one here to listen, when she would be more angry at us than she is now! No, no! We must lay our plans carefully. I will see her to-day and arrange the day, hour and other matters; then we will be sure and have an enthusiastic audience on hand. She will be in fine humor and say something about her approaching ball, when we can refer to our having no invitations, and all will be made right."

The following day Miss Mettle called to me:

"Mrs. Winn, next week, Tuesday, at eight o'clock, I want

these rooms filled with girls, and they must be instructed to clap their hands and cry (not too loud, but with an English accent) 'Hear! Hear! Bravo! Bravo!' whenever the speaker makes a pause."

"I will do my best, but when I tell them it's a lecture, you know, Miss Mettle, they cannot be depended on to turn out."

"Yes, that is so," returned Miss Mettle, pausing a while to think what was best to be done. "I tell you, Mrs. Winn, what you may do. You may tell them that every girl who comes and does as she is told will receive a handsome silver filagree hairpin. I will send up a sample for you to take around to show."

"I will do as you say, Miss Mettle, but——" and I hesitated.

"But what, Mrs. Winn?"

"There is sickness in many of the houses I shall have to visit. I have been ashamed to go among them for weeks past without taking something to the sick ones."

"Well, there is a quarter. Buy some oranges and grapes for all that need them," and Miss Mettle left me, meditating in my usual vein.

Late Tuesday afternoon Mrs. Islip was engaged with her hairdresser, who was only employed for special occasions. Her fair hair was down over her shoulders and her slippered feet comfortably placed on a foot-rest, when she started up suddenly and called:

"Roundout! Roundout! Are you in the next room?"

"'Ess, I is," returned the boy.

"Please bring Mummer Islip the morning paper."

The lad appeared with the sheet and noticing the presence of the hairdresser, which was the signal that his grandmother was going somewhere, he said:

"Are you going to the nussry? Oh, take me, Mummer

Islip; *do* take me. I want to drive lame Johnnie and Willie."

Mrs. Islip laughed and kissed the importunate pleader while she said:

"My child, I am not going to the nursery. But perhaps I will take you with me if you will be good. Mummer Islip is going to ascend the rostrum this evening."

"Is that somesing good to eat, Mummer Islip?"

"Hardly, my boy; it means that I am going to lecture."

"Not as oo do Papa Grout and Grandpapa Islip 'n' me sometimes?"

"Not exactly; more as I talk to the ladies who come to call."

"Ess, I knows; n'en oo'll say to 'em to-night, 'How d' do? oo is lookin' booful,' but if oo was goin' to lecture me oo ud say, 'Roundout, go brush your hair; oo is a fright;' 'n' I might be better lookin' 'n' the uzzers."

"Oh, you little rogue, go along and leave me to read the paper undisturbed. I do not know yet what subject I am to talk upon. I told them it did not make any difference; they might put down what they chose. Oh see!" (this to her hairdresser) "nearly a column devoted to the affair." (Looking suddenly in the glass), "Madam Capotover, you are not putting up my hair *au royale*?" (referring to the most elaborate style of hair architecture of which her tonsorial artiste was mistress.)

"No, do you wish it that way? I did not know the occasion called for so much dress, and it takes nearly two hours."

"Never mind, if I *look* imposing and majestic it won't make any difference what I *say*. After I find out what subject they have put me down for I will close my eyes and think up some stories" (reading half aloud):

"This club seeks by every means in its power to tone,

refine, cultivate, uplift and elevate its members. It gives them—and so on, and so on,’ oh dear! what a list of things, but where is the subject that they expect me to talk on. (Not that it makes much difference, only I think it better form to mention it.) Oh, yes, here it is: ‘Numerous eloquent speakers have from time to time given their talents (*given!* I should say so. I never knew those young ladies to *pay* for anything they could get by begging, borrowing or stealing) in this noble, philanthropic undertaking, and *this* evening a highly interesting, instructive, uplifting and exhaustive discourse will be given by that model of public speakers (there, Madam Capotover, see how necessary it is that my hair should be done up in the grandest possible manner?), Mrs. Silas Islip, who is not only proficient in this line but is also without peer as a hostess (dear me, that sounds as though some one had been omitted in the invitations to my ball). Her subject will be (just listen, Madam Capotover) Women Financiers *Nascitur Non Fit!*’ ”

The reader must be told in an aside that upon Annie Hopper had devolved the duty of selecting a subject for Mrs. Islip. Miss Hopper’s acquaintance with the Latin tongue being limited to her ability to repeat that well-worn commonplace “*Poëta nascitur non fit,*” (Poets are born not made)—and she, being extremely fond of this sentiment, determined to modernize and render it partially original as well as to emphasize Miss Denny’s defects in the manner above stated without regard to the number of the verb.

“Madam Capotover, do you think you are getting those puffs on the left of my head up high enough?”

“I can put them a leetle higher if you say so,” replied the woman good humoredly. “How favored them gals

will be to hear you speak on such a subject. Jest say it agen please."

"Woman Financiers *Nascitur Non Fit*."

"I have heered the fust two words before," returned the woman, "but the rest is Scandinavian, ain't it?"

"It may be," returned Mrs. Islip thoughtfully, holding her chin between her thumb and forefinger and for a brief space omitting to suggest and direct in the arrangement of her hair. At length she said, smiling brightly: "I think rather it is a typographical error and it should read 'women financiers, like nasturtiums, should not fight.'"

"Oh, Mrs. Islip, ma'am, how clever you be! Now I never 'ud have thought of its being a mistake. But of course, young gals 'ud be jest the ones to like to hear of flowers and sech."

Mrs. Islip shook her head and shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't think much of the subject and I should like to know who selected it. But never mind, the subject is not of as much importance as the speaker, and seeing I am to act in that capacity I must hasten my preparations."

"Oh, Mrs. Islip, ma'am," exclaimed Madam Capotover, her voice quivering and her hands trembling with pleasurable excitement, "how lovely it 'ud be seeing as how you are going to talk on nasturtions to have you dressed like one!"

"Why, I don't know but you are right, Madam Capotover, though yellow is not the most becoming color I wear."

"But I could arrange it so as only the green of the leaves should be near your face, Mrs. Islip, ma'am."

"Very well, I will call my maid and she shall help you."

At eight o'clock every available seat in the long beautifully furnished club rooms was filled with expectant girls, among them being a number with short hair!

Biddy O'Monahan was one, and when Maggie Flynn

laughed at her for coming out to get a hairpin she could not use, Biddy replied:

"Bedad, thin, it's mesilf as 'ull be afther usin' it for an ornament to the errown I am makin' me for Miss Dinny's next ball."

Miss Mettle introduced the speaker of the evening and at the close of her remarks there moved into the center of the stage, as it were, a huge bunch from last season's nasturtium vines, the whole surmounted by Mrs. Islip's smiling, airy countenance.

The work of her enthusiastic hairdresser, assisted by her maid, had been brought to a successful perfection by suggestions from Mrs. Islip's landscape gardener, who had called opportunely on a matter relative to her country seat and had had his services impressed into deciding at what angle the leaves and tendrils looked best that were to ornament her shaded yellow robe. Each elbow sleeve was arranged to represent a huge nasturtium, and by the aid of the man of science the perfection of her toilette was such that she would have looked equally well on a lawn or on a lecture platform.

She stood there a moment enjoying the sensation her first appearance caused, which emotion was expressed in expirations and inspirations of different degrees of power. Clementine Flutter, sitting on the front rows of seats, exclaimed, clasping her hands:

"How perfectly lovely! did you ever see anything go ahead of them sleeves? How *be* they made?"

As if to help her fathom the mystery, Mrs. Islip at this juncture kissed her hand to the right and said, "Ladies," then kissed her hand to the front and said, "Women," and, performing the same gesture to the left, said:

"Girls, I come before you this evening by request, to talk on a subject chosen by one of the august founders of

this important philanthropic undertaking. (Many pairs of eyes were turned toward Miss Annie Hopper at this allusion.) It is a subject which I will leave to your discretion, to decide upon its merit, its appropriateness, its wisdom, its humanitarianism, its profound catholicity. (Miss Hopper's countenance was radiant with gratified ambition.) In short, ladies, women, girls, (between each name Mrs. Islip kissed her hand as before), I am here to talk to you on the subject of 'Woman Financiers,' (Miss Hopper listened breathlessly to hear her precious Latin phrase, but instead she heard), 'like Nasturtiums, should not Fight.' "

It was fortunate that the girls had been instructed to cry "hear, hear," and "bravo, bravo," for otherwise the impressive pause Mrs. Islip made after announcing her subject would have been disturbed by Miss Hopper's ravings. As it was, her exclamations: "What a shameful perversion! I can't stand it to have everybody think I would get up such a stupid subject! I must stop her!" were drowned by the cries above mentioned. There was also a little further distraction caused by Clementine Flutter, who in her anxiety to discover how the under part of the sleeves which had so attracted her were constructed had leaned over too far, lost her balance and fallen on to the floor. But she picked herself up and took her seat as Mrs. Islip resumed:

"Women financiers, my friends, are to my mind, somewhat of a delusion and a snare; because it is so rarely you come across a woman that knows anything more about finances, than it takes to know how to run in debt. The most of them can run in that direction fast enough (noticing uneasy movements on the part of the three fair philanthropists); not that I mean anything per-

sonal; those are merely my observations on womankind in general."

Mrs. Islip pausing here to refresh her weary throat by a drink of cold water, her audience filled the interim by animated and enthusiastic cries of "hear! hear!" and "bravo! bravo!"

"As to their not fighting like the nasturtiums, not being a scientific botanist, I cannot say positively what the habits of those blossoms are; but I know the tendency of all womankind when associated together is such that the prohibition contained in our text is rarely followed, although it should be. Every one present will bear me out in the statement, as your leader has expressed it, that women financiers and (I would add) women what not, like nasturtiums should not fight."

Miss Hopper was with difficulty restrained from arising at this point and refuting point blank the ignominious charge of being the originator of the above peculiar sentiment, but Miss Denny got on one side of her and Miss Mettle on the other and they pictured the dark night of despair into which they would be all plunged if Mrs. Islip were offended, and thus succeeded in calming her down. Unconscious of the disturbance she was causing, Mrs. Islip proceeded, a thoroughly satisfied expression beaming upon her countenance, which was further emphasized by the nodding buds, blossoms and foliage of the nasturtium vines with which she was decorated.

"Speaking of fighting, I am reminded of an experience I had in London. It was the night of Her Majesty's reception. I had been several times before, but I was anxious to go upon the night in question, because I was to give a reception myself, and in order to have such affairs successful you have to appear in the best circles. Before it came my turn to go in, there were two ladies, each of

whom claimed the right to be presented first. They began their dispute by words. But soon their words grew so inflammable that they fell upon each other and had to be taken out by the attendants, and in consequence I was introduced before two ladies of high rank and station. If ever my biography is written I shall have the circumstance minutely detailed, a description of my dress, the dresses of Lady Twirlingame and Lady Muckworthey, and how they looked trying to snatch the feathers from each other's hair, while I was just as calm and placid as I am this moment."

Mrs. Islip looked around her audience, smiling her artificial smile and enjoying the sensation her words aroused, which was expressed in prolonged "hear, hears," and "bravo, bravos." Then she continued:

"You will observe how neatly my story illustrates the subject we are considering, ladies, women, girls (given with the same waving of the hand as at first), namely, 'Women Financiers like the Nasturtium should not fight.'"

The rage produced by the red rag before a bull was nothing in comparison to Miss Hopper's exasperation whenever her mutilated subject was repeated. Her companions urged her to leave the place, but she would not. She chose rather to stay and writhe and squirm with her lacerated feelings expressing herself at times by sundry snorts and sniffs.

"If I had fought," continued Mrs. Islip, enlivening her remarks by her hollow little laugh, "like those ladies I should *never* have been able to have had it said of *me* that I entered the presence of her majesty before the nobility! Hence my advice to you this evening is—do not fight like the nasturtium nor any other plant or animal you know of or may hear about in the years to come. And that

makes me think of the winter I spent in Washington; I mean the capital of our country, not Washington, Connecticut, or any of those other numerous little two-cent hamlets, consisting of a gristmill and a blacksmith shop, by the same name." (This remark was caused by the lecturer perceiving several of the girls looking at each other and nodding as much as to say, "I've been there.") "It was a severe winter, so much so that the florists were taken unawares and a great many greenhouses were frozen out. The consequence was, flowers were extraordinarily high in price. In fact there were days when you could not get anything but nasturtiums. I remember I was to attend a grand affair at the President's one evening and I had ordered my favorite rose. Instead, the florist sent me quantities of nasturtiums. I was greatly annoyed, for the odor of the blossom is offensive to me. But there was no help for it. I arranged them in the back of my hair and as far away from my nose as possible and I had more compliments on my personal appearance that evening than usual. I never shall forget with what abandon of delight the chief justice regarded me while he said: 'What flower could compare with you!' and the minister of foreign affairs with his hand over his heart exclaimed: 'Madam, I have seen foreign beauties, but you defy description.' I could tell they all meant what they said, too, which is a great deal. Therefore, friends, you will all admit that Women Financiers——"

Mrs. Islip was interrupted by a card from Miss Mettle on which was written:

"Please omit repeating the subject. A case of mental disorder has arisen and the sound of the words composing the subject seems to produce an aggravation of the disease."

This was deemed necessary by Miss Hopper's highly

excited state and her persistence in remaining where fuel was constantly being thrown on the fire of her combustible nature. Miss Mettle and Miss Denny were exceedingly worn by their efforts to pacify her until the close of the lecture upon which so much depended.

"Yes, that is right; I thought you would admit it," continued the speaker as soon as the animated cries of "hear, hear," and "bravo, bravo," that filled up the interim of reading the card had died away. "And it seems hardly fitting that a discourse on woman financiers should be finished without some reference to economy. To practise economy and to talk economy seems to be the fashionable fad of the day. It is a harmless idea with nothing immoral about it, hence I fully endorse it. There are fads like buying lottery tickets and playing craps, which I do all I can to discourage; but not so with economy. I advise you all to practise it. You can do so in various ways—you can buy less jewelry."

Clementine Flutter showed her agreement with this sage advice by nodding her head and whispering, "That's so, and I think I shall."

"You can buy a few less dresses."

Biddy O'Monahan's mouth opened and she said:

"Faith, thin, if I did I'd hev nothing to civer me; it's only two gowns as I hiv now!"

"You can cut down in the length of your gloves. It would be a great saving to always buy two-button gloves."

Mrs. Islip seemed greatly impressed with this suggestion, as being something altogether new, and she enlarged upon it; dwelling especially on the item of buying two-button gloves, emphasizing her words with gesticulations in a pair of gloves that reached her shoulders. Sounds of weeping from Maggie Flynn disturbed her remarks and Miss Mettle motioned to Mrs. Winn to find out the cause

of the girl's sorrow. She said when led out in the hall:

"How *kin* I help it, Mrs. Winn?—boo-hoo, boo-hoo. I don't *mean* to precipitate no 'stravagance, and I'd ruther do as the lady says, and have always two button gloves; but what kin a poor gal do? Jest look!" She held out a pair of filthy, dirty, ten-button party gloves which were at one time flesh color. "I don't have enough wages to buy gloves and these are the only ones that gets giv to me."

At the conclusion of Mrs. Islip's lecture she was presented with a choice bouquet of flowers while roses were sprinkled on the raised dais around her with a lavishness that tried to ignore the fact that they were costing three dollars a dozen.

The applause, the congratulations and the flowers had the desired effect and our three fair philanthropists had the satisfaction of seeing their weighty problem dissolving into air. Mrs. Islip invited them to her grand ball, beside promising to send them invitations on the morrow. She had already ordered them sent, she told them; but her son-in-law had doubtless made a mistake. The three young ladies thought it a mistake the result of a purpose though they did not say so.

CHAPTER XXV.

DESCRIBES A PARTY AND A PROPOSAL.

AT length the grand event about which the reader has been hearing is to be a reality. Mrs. Islip's ball, the invitations to which have been the occasion of so much solicitude, planning, expenditure of money, time, nervous energy, and finally the occasion of triumphant pleasure in possession, is a thing of the present.

If any feel disposed to grumble at the great number of entertainments they have been invited to attend in these pages and to say: "Between Miss Mettle's evenings, Miss Denny's balls, Miss Hopper's recitations and Mrs. Islip's lecture, and now another ball, our patience is simply exhausted and our nerves unstrung. What is in the way of our being treated to a quiet home scene for a change?" the author would reply the difficulty in granting such a request is that the class of people to which the three fair philanthropists belong, namely, the gay fashionables, are individuals Coleridge undoubtedly had in mind when he said, "The largest part of mankind are nowhere greater strangers than at home."

This "quiet home scene" for which the reader calls, if true to life, would be composed of *dramatis personæ* either stretched upon their beds in slumber; or seated at the table, dumpish and mute, eating a meal, while they watch the clock through fear of being late for their next engagement; or else, abusing their maids and valets, they would be found smirking and twisting in front of mirrors trying

to catch glimpses of their magnificent apparel from every conceivable angle previous to their appearance at some grand festivity. If my readers think such "home scenes" would afford any relief to their exhausted patience or recruit their unstrung nerves they are at liberty to paint them for themselves, in which case the author bids them adieu and turns to the task she has set herself of dealing with her characters upon their native heath.

The time had been limited in which our three friends must order their dresses, but there was no suggestion of limitation when one looked at the magnificence and splendor of their final appearance. It happened that they arrived nearly together and were in the dressing room at the same time. Miss Mettle's dress was a crimson satin, brocaded with peacock's feathers (size and color true to life), not arranged in symmetrical rows, but lying carelessly in such a manner that a bird of that family coming in sight would have wept a companion slain and thought his plumage had been thrown upon a sea of gore. This was not at all the dress she had hoped to have. An importer down town had promised to have a satin woven especially for her which should have a ground work of tawny yellow with a life size royal Bengal tiger rejoicing in the rich markings of those inhabitants of the Indian jungles, brocaded in the front. It was to be made up with the back of the head on her breast and the forepaws around her waist. She would look like the woman being devoured by the tiger and have been a standing miracle to children and unsophisticated persons that she was able to survive the onslaught of such a fierce beast. It was found impossible to have this unique gown finished in time for Mrs. Islip's ball, so Miss Mettle had to content herself with the peacock's feathers strewn on the sea of gore. She presented an uncommon appearance and no mistake. It was her

aim to be unlike other people and she seldom failed in accomplishing this object.

Miss Hopper on the other hand was so unlike the ordinary individual in the matter of corpulency, short stature, redness of complexion and protuberance of eye that her aim was the exact reverse of Miss Mettle's, but she was far less successful in carrying it out. The top knot with which she strove (together with the aid of high French heels) to remedy her lack of height had too great a tendency to lodge on either one side or the other of her head, and this gave her an unusually convivial, not to say tipsy, air. To-night she had on a white satin, a fabric peculiarly suited and most commonly worn at evening parties, but in her case its shiny whiteness seemed to bring out and accentuate her portliness of figure, especially as she seemed determined to take vengeance on this same portliness by devices so well known to portly females.

Miss Mettle and she were interrupted in the midst of their whispered wonderings as to how Mr. Grout would receive them this evening by Miss Denny. A knot of peach-colored satin ribbon had come off her shoulder and she wanted her companions to decide whether she should return it to its place or whether she looked better without it.

"Stand still a minute, Grace, if you want us to tell!" exclaimed Miss Hopper. "The movement of her dress, quivering and palpitating, makes me think of loosened bed-springs," she continued in an aside to Miss Mettle.

"Yes," replied the young lady addressed in an answering aside, "it makes me seasick. *One* good thing, downstairs there will be a crowd that will prevent her fluttering to any extent." Then addressing Miss Denny, she said:

"Grace, you look better with only *one* shoulder knot. It is more odd and unlike other people."

"I don't think so, Grace," said Miss Hopper. "One

shoulder knot makes you look lop-sided. You need two."

"Well, how am I going to tell which to do?" exclaimed Miss Denny, standing before the glass on one toe and twirling round until each of her many peach-colored tulle flounces reaching her waist stood out at right angles from her person.

"Oh, Grace, don't!" they exclaimed, both at once, while they moved toward the door.

"They are a couple of jealous prigs!" said Miss Denny to herself, as she continued her admiring looks and touches before the glass after the departure of her friends. "Just because I am younger and better looking and have some taste in my dress they are put out with me. I'll be even with them later in the evening; you see if I am not!" and she winked so engagingly at her reflection in the glass that a burst of laughter was the result, in which both joined.

Her merriment was interrupted by the entrance of Leonora Bullwinkle. Leonora's small soul had been dilating with pleasurable emotions at every step she had taken since leaving her carriage because of the delightful consciousness that she was about to appear—not at the house of a friend or any one she cared for; but because she was to appear at a place where the three fair philanthropists wanted to come and could not. She had not been apprised of the lecture and hence had not heard of their change of fortune. On the way upstairs to the dressing room she had taken especial notice of the banks of flowers, the arrangements of the palms and other shrubbery. She noticed there was one more footman in the hall than she had been accustomed to seeing. And she remarked that the stripes in the vests of all the men ran diagonally. She had just made a change from horizontal to perpendicular

in the stripes of her own servants, but she determined to introduce this latest device as soon as possible.

Storing away several such important items in her limited brain room, in order to be very entertaining the next time she met her friends, she entered the dressing room. She was throwing aside her outer wraps preparatory to revelling for a brief space in her great magnificence of diamond necklace and sparkling coronet, to say nothing of her canary yellow and purple velvet gown, when she discovered Miss Denny.

"Why, are *you* here!" she said, unable to conceal her chagrin. "I don't mean that; I mean how nice that you can be here and how nice if Miss Mettle and Miss Hopper could also be here."

"You will undoubtedly be pleased to know, that they *are*, and both downstairs," returned Miss Denny haughtily.

"Why, you don't mean it!" returned Leonora, her thick utterance giving the impression that she was choking.

Miss Denny's only answer was to sweep out of the room, and as she did so she swept a great deal of happiness from Miss Bullwinkle's mean little soul.

Miss Mettle and Annie Hopper on descending to pay their respects to host and hostess found the rooms comfortably filled. They were glad to have it so, because this was the first time they had met Mr. K. Roundout Grout since he had made his notable contribution to the cause of philanthropy represented by their girls' club. His greeting of Miss Hopper was markedly reserved, not to say distant. Toward Miss Mettle with the reserve there was mingled a melancholy that expressed itself after the first few commonplaces in a lugubrious sigh.

"I fear you are not feeling well," said Miss Mettle, the nearest approach to a blush her cold features ever at-

tained, overspreading her countenance at this attempt at coquetry.

"Physically I am perfectly well," returned the ex-congressman, "but you know there are other ills than those of the body," and he placed his hand impressively over his heart as if to indicate that that organ was the seat of his present indisposition.

There was no time for reply, on account of the entrance of more guests. Miss Mettle therefore gave her metallic little laugh, the same with which she greeted all her friends' confidences, from a narration of a bill of fare to a death in the family, and passed on. Mr. Grout approached her a few minutes later and in a lofty manner asked permission to affix his name to her programme for the dances.

"I tried to get to you before I made my engagements with Miss Denny," he said. "But I ran across her first and she is such a fascinating little thing I had to give her several dances in spite of myself."

"Miss Denny indeed!" said Miss Mettle to herself as she watched her companion write his name on her list. "How men can be ensnared by girls like Grace Denny is a mystery to me! And I believe the man is going to dance with her first! He shan't do it if I can help it!"

Taking her programme, where there was no fault to be found with the number of times the initials K. R. G. appeared, she pointed to the last time and said: "I hardly think my mother will care to stay late enough for *that* dance. Suppose you change it for the second;" she knew he was to dance the first with Mrs. Islip.

"The second," repeated Mr. Grout, looking at his engagements and pondering. "The second I am down to dance with Miss Denny."

"Oh, very well," returned Miss Mettle, straightening up and looking off in a manner to indicate her displeasure.

"I will change if you would like to have me," returned Mr. Grout.

"Oh, never mind; I would not have you put yourself out on *my* account," said Miss Mettle, her words indicating a termination of the interview, while her not moving showed she had something yet to accomplish.

"She will storm and rage, but by Jove, it shall be done! I know no higher law than your pleasure, fair lady," said Mr. Grout, writing his name in the place Miss Mettle indicated, and leaving her, that he might make the change with Miss Denny.

Mrs. Islip's art gallery was devoted to dancing. The floral decorations there as all over the house were very elaborate. In no tropic yet visited by man did the palm trees, mammoth ferns and large rubber plants flourish with such luxuriance. In the corners of several of the rooms vegetation seemed to reach such riotous proportions that sheer necessity called into existence booths or nooks, where art combining with nature, colored lanterns of curious carved Japanese workmanship, were placed, together with gayly embroidered cushions, and here the wearied dancer might find rest in the pauses of the music.

Miss Mettle had finished her third dance with Mr. Grout and there was to be one number in which she was not to participate when her mother approached, looking careworn and anxious.

"I have wanted to get hold of you, Ray, for some time. Come in here," she said, drawing her daughter into one of the bowers of green farthest away from the music. She was nervous and the poor lace fan in her hands was

suffering in consequence of her constant opening and shutting or slapping it against her closed fist.

"I have been astonished, Ray," she said after an embarrassing pause, "to see how many times you have been dancing with Mr. Grout."

"I have only danced three times with him," answered her daughter.

"But one of those times was the second dance, next to the one in which he opened the ball with his mother-in-law, a circumstance to occasion remark, and I have heard several comments already."

"Ha! let them comment all they have a mind," replied Miss Mettle. "Did you think I was going to let that stuck-up, conceited Grace Denny have that honor when I could help it? A woman does not have to be engaged or feel obliged to marry every man she dances with."

"Ray, there is *no* use of your trifling with facts in that foolish way. Here you have been telling me that you preferred to be a bishop's wife rather than a congressman's, and to humor you I have been bending every energy to accomplish that end. I have left nothing undone that could in any way advance your interests. I have gone to confessional when you know I had to rack my brains to their utmost to get anything to confess. I have hired three seats in the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven though your father will not put his foot inside the church, and hence that is just so much money thrown away. We went over to the Mission and nearly killed ourselves as volunteer workers, and since then by repeated invitations to dinner, I have had the extreme satisfaction of seeing Rector Dunraven as an iceberg when approaching the tropics grow less and less frigid, and there was every probability with the proper management his nature under the rays of that all-powerful

luminary, love, would have melted, budded, blossomed and——”

“Don’t talk so loud; some one will hear you,” interrupted Miss Mettle.

“I am not saying anything of which I am ashamed, Ray Mettle, I wish you to understand. But I am talking on a subject of the most vital importance to your present and future welfare, and I cannot comprehend how a person like yourself can stand on the edge of such an awful precipice unmoved!”

To Mrs. Mettle’s heated imagination celibacy seemed represented by a bottomless pit, on the edge of which all unmarried people were condemned to stand and into which they were bound to fall, unless by superhuman exertions either on their own or their friends’ part they were saved, by being drawn into the state of matrimony.

“I have spoken to Rector Dunraven this evening,” replied Miss Mettle. “I feel just as cordial toward him as I ever did. But I don’t see how you can blame me for wanting to keep the upper hand of Grace Denny. You know how unbearable she is if she does not get a setting down once in a while. Even you thought it would have been a great blow not to be invited to this ball and I do not see the good of being here without enjoying yourself, which *I* never could have done had I seen Grace Denny dance that time with Mr. Grout.”

“I know at one time I spoke favorably of coming here, Ray, but if I could have foreseen how much I was going to suffer by your compromising and fickle behavior, I should have shunned the place as I would a pest hospital.”

“Mummy Mettle, how is *my* behavior any more compromising and fickle than Rector Dunraven’s? He has

been surrounded by a bevy of ladies most of the time and has approached me but twice!"

"He had *tried* to get to you oftener, Ray, for he told me so, and if you had not filled up your time dancing so often with Mr. Grout, he would have been with you instead of being surrounded by those ladies you mention. I must confess to having a curiosity about those same people, so much so that I joined their circle to see who they were and what was the common topic of interest. I found them absorbed in discussing with the rector different patterns for embroidering altar cloths, vestments, and banners. They appeared to be well-meaning individuals, but you would think to hear them talk that their eternal salvation depended on the number and exquisite finish of their embroidery. I am sure I have heard somewhere of a *narrow* way to heaven; but *they* seem to be filled with a notion that it's an *embroidered* way. To each other they were telling how many times they had scrubbed on hands and knees the chancel and the aisles, and the number and size of the black and blue spots they had received in consequence."

"If I were a bishop's wife I wonder if I would be expected to lead out such a host?" asked Miss Mettle reflectively.

"What kind of a host?" returned her mother.

"Why, an army of those high-church women scrubbers, dusters and embroiderers," said Miss Mettle.

"Very likely, at some of their high pageants, Ray, and let me tell you, my love, for such an occasion you could not have a more appropriate dress than the one you have on. For you could be "my lady of the holy duster" and your badge of office a magnificent bunch of peacock's feathers tied with a bow of crimson ribbon the color of the ground work of your dress for a dusting brush and

as you walked, you might wave the feathers to and fro and the effect would be simply wonderful!"

All Mrs. Mettle's troubles seemed to disappear at this vision of her daughter's future glory.

"But what are you scowling at?" she asked, as she turned round suddenly, and found her daughter looking intently out of the opening to the bower of green which they occupied, at some object which roused her anger.

"There is Grace Denny with Mr. Grout again? And he is laughing at some one she is mimicking. Look! *there* they go, past that pillar near the end of the hall leading into the ballroom. See them?"

"Yes, I see," returned her mother, "but what do you care?"

"I believe she is taking *me* off, the viper!" exclaimed Ray Mettle.

Both ladies watched the couple, when Mrs. Mettle said:

"You are right, Ray, that's the way you nod your head when you are out of humor. But never mind; she is a frivolous, vain person. I would not give her foolish actions a thought."

"She is trying to influence him to break his other engagements with me, I know," returned the daughter.

"What! you were not intending to dance any *more* with him, Ray?" asked her mother.

"You can see how many times he wrote his name on my programme," and Miss Mettle showed not without a slight touch of pride her list of dances.

"Well, Ray, I can't help feeling discouraged! Here you have not had anything to do with Mr. Grout for some time and have led me to think that the rector had taken his place in your affections, though you can hardly be said truthfully to *have* affections; people with affections marry young. It would be nearer the mark to say I

thought the rector had taken his place in your favorable opinion. In consequence, by my assiduous attentions and wise management, the rector has been brought to a condition where he might be expected to propose at any moment; and now you venture to trifle with your fate by encouraging Mr. Grout as you have this evening. I have the greatest mind in the world to wash my hands of you entirely."

If Miss Mettle had said what she felt most inclined to say, she would have intimated to her maternal relative that a course such as she described would be quite in accordance with her daughter's desires. But as the heathen, in consequence of centuries of false teaching, fear to throw off the bondage of their idol-worship, although no good can ever be proven to have resulted from it, but on the contrary great evils, so Miss Mettle held similar superstitious feelings in regard to freeing herself from her mother's matrimonial plans in her behalf. So she hastened to take her mother's little fat hand and, stroking it, pleasantly said:

"Now, mummy, don't get mad. Go get the rector, if he can be exhumed from the bevy of young ladies that hedge him in on every side, and I will rejoice your heart by being very good to him."

"Do you *mean* it, Ray?" asked her mother anxiously.

"Yes, I mean it, and I'll wait for you here."

We must do Miss Mettle the credit to say that her intentions were perfectly honest in making this agreement with her mother. She waited some moments in the very seat her mother left her, looking up at the finely carved lantern hanging from the mass of green, wondering if the red glass beneath the carving was Bohemian or American glass; then she picked up the sofa cushion and examined the embroidery. Presently the band from

the ball room struck up a strain of music which caused her to look at her programme, for she had forgotten to whom she had promised this dance. A Mr. Luke Waters was down, and, glancing out, she saw him looking for her. She motioned to him, and when he approached she said:

"Mr. Waters, please excuse me from this dance; I am too fatigued."

Mr. Waters accepted the situation very cheerfully and was off to secure another partner without delay. As Miss Mettle was returning to the seat she had left a deep bass voice said in her ear:

"I am glad you mean to be rested for your dance with me."

It was Mr. Grout, and he had Miss Denny's peach-colored feather fan in his hand.

Miss Mettle looked at him resentfully as she said:

"I am intending to cancel my engagement with you also."

"I refuse to allow you to do such a thing without granting me a good and sufficient reason."

Mr. Grout spoke peremptorily, and, following Miss Mettle into the green covert where she promised to remain seated himself resolutely at her side.

"Reason!" exclaimed Miss Mettle, laughing scornfully. "A man want a reason for a lady's action when he can join in ridiculing that lady."

"I deny it! I never joined Miss Denny in ridiculing you! In fact, I *tried* to stop her. But you know Grace Denny!"

Mr. Grout had determined to try what pique would do in furthering his cause with Miss Mettle, but he realized that this valuable agency must not be used too far.

"Yes, I know Grace Denny," replied Miss Mettle, "and

I know some people consider her fascinating, but it is a mystery to me wherein her fascinations consist!"

"She may be fascinating," returned the ex-congressman, recognizing his previous wily expression and inwardly pleased at the opposition it aroused, "but in comparison with another her fascinations may be like the starlight in comparison with the light from the great and glorious orb of day," and Mr. Grout turned on his companion a look that was intended to make it very clear which *he* considered the greater light.

Miss Mettle sat up stiff and straight beside him apparently unmoved by his speech, though in reality she was casting up in her mind how she could manage to keep him from Grace Denny the rest of this dance (because the fan in his hand showed him to be on his way back to the vixen in peach-colored tulle) and at the same time keep the engagement with her mother and the rector.

At all events, she could not remain where she was, for Mr. Grout, after a few minutes' silence and several lugubrious sighs, took her hand and pressing it tenderly, said:

"I have offended you in some way, dear Miss Mettle. Believe me, I am sorry. Pity and forgive me."

Miss Mettle rose to her feet, and her companion said:

"You are tired of sitting. Shall we take a stroll through the rooms?"

"Just for a minute or two," returned Miss Mettle.

"We need not hasten," replied Mr. Grout, "for the next dance you have promised me, and this dance is cancelled."

Miss Mettle's conscience reminding her of her promise to her mother, after going a short distance she tried to return, and as an excuse pleaded the loss of a valuable lace handkerchief; but as her companion insisted on returning in her place, and, as that would not have made

matters better, but rather worse, they decided to look for the handkerchief later on. Miss Mettle realized that her companion had a particular spot toward which he was directing his steps, although he put on an air of merely sauntering through the rooms. They passed in the spacious hall on one side of the fountain, which was surrounded by flowers and ferns, while on the other Miss Mettle recognized her mother and Rector Dunraven, stopping for a short chat with a chance acquaintance. Mr. Grout must have seen them, too, for after suggesting a pause at the fountain he passed directly to the massively carved staircase and on upstairs.

"I think you have not been here, have you?" he asked, as together they reached a balcony enclosed in a kind of glass that made one think of ice.

"We call this our Icelandic grotto," he continued, taking Miss Mettle to the farthest corner and seating her on a divan.

It was just enough cooler here to be delightful. The only light was that from colored lanterns, and the noise from below reached them in a subdued murmur. Several other couples were enjoying the pleasure of this retreat, and their conversation and quiet laughter added to the feeling of happy content that seemed to pervade the place.

Miss Mettle, with cushions at her back and under her feet, with Mr. Grout as submissive and attentive as a slave, vowing that Cleopatra could not have looked as handsome as she did, was yielding herself up to the seductions of the hour, when a movement on the part of some of the couples nearest her reminded her that time was flying, for these people were going down for a new dance. The promise to her mother came again to her, and she said:

"You must take me downstairs, Mr. Grout."

"Why so?" asked that gentleman in an injured tone. "Where is your programme? I'm down for this dance, am I not? Yes, there you see my initials, K. R. G.! You are mine for this dance; you are mine, all mine; could we spend the time in any more enchanting place, eh, darling?" and Mr. Grout's arm stole around Miss Mettle's waist. "Why not be mine longer than for this dance?" he continued, as Miss Mettle remained silent, but a look of unmistakable content appeared upon her countenance. "Be mine for life," he urged, encouraged by her look and the departure of every one but themselves for the dancing hall, to draw her close to him.

"But my mother—what will she say?" murmured Miss Mettle.

"Never mind what *she* will say. She likes me, and I can make it all right with her. *You* are the one to say. Say yes, and seal it with a kiss."

Miss Mettle's "yes" was uttered very softly, but it reached her lover's delighted ear, and was followed by a long, passionate embrace.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PROFESSOR POGGENBEEK, FROM THE "NORT-VEST.

LIFE at the Working Girls' Club had been reminding me (and "me" in this instance means Mrs. Winn) ever since the evening of the encounter between Leonora Bullwinkle and Mary Sharkey, of the early days in the history of our country, when border warfare was carried on between the settlers and the Indians, and victory was on the side of first one party and then the other. Mary Sharkey was very regular in her attendance; the excitement of having a "foeman worthy of her steel" to encounter made the place more attractive than anything else could have done, and, as for Leonora, her mind was too small to grasp any other notion of revenge than that of returning an insult in kind, with as much additional rancor as it was possible, with her limited intellectual capacity, to inflict.

There still remained the idea and wish to teach, instruct, educate, in the minds of the managers, and even Miss Bullwinkle was pleased to term her forays, her oft-times exceedingly animated encounters with Mary Sharkey, "training prosesthetics."

The singular nature and their effect on an unprejudiced beholder of these training processes can best be shown by giving the reader Professor Poggenbeek's experience. This gentleman presented himself before me one day with the following introduction:

"Meedames, you do see before yous von gentlemans lecturer from de great and noble country of de Nort-vest!"

Pausing as if to give me time to recover from the shock of finding myself in the vicinity of such an august personage, he proceeded:

“And now, meedames, I do assure you that it will be my intention of so producing der grand characterization of de mettoads in wogue mit de benevolent beebles in de East dat de greatest glory will eventually crown your heads—eh, so? Accordingly, meedames, I will here delight to sit myself to-day, to-morrow, und many day, mit my pencil und mit my paper, tinkering, studying und writing.”

I soon grew accustomed to the presence of Professor Poggenbeek. He had a fat, dumpy figure, a bald head, and eyes so nearsighted that reading or writing had to be held very near his nose in order to be distinguished.

“Well, professor,” I asked, after he had been at work two or three days, “how are you getting along? Have you made any valuable additions to your previous knowledge of philanthropy and the methods of carrying it on?”

“Oh, meedames, it is vunderfuls! I vill bes immortal ven I gets to my homes and tells all dat I haf seen. De beebles in my place vas tinkering of starting a girls’ club, and dey say, find out what tings must be had; and so here I puts all dat I haf seen. Joost reads for yourselves.”

I took the paper and found he had begun at the vases and bric-à-brac and given a minute description of each, which occupied three and a half foolscap sheets; then he had taken the furniture, and that filled four sheets. At the bottom of one page there was the following note:

“I finds nottings must be used as furniture in de girls’ clubs which costs one stiver less dan twenty-five dollar.”

“But, professor,” I said, “are you not afraid by putting down so many things and having them so costly you will

discourage your fellow-townspeople from undertaking to establish what might do a great deal of good?"

"Oh, meedames neevair, neevair!" and the professor's round, bald pate shook a decided negative. "My experience vill be teaching me dat human natures inclines to elegance; as de screeptures say, de sparks inclines to fly upward. I haf long time ago stopped recommending anytings dat vas cheeps. If you say den ve must be reech beebles, I say, oh, no, but dair is von large stretch of unmortgaged propertys; ven I gets home I tells them how to raise de moneys on dat."

"But if your town is not very large, perhaps you would not find many working girls in it," I said.

"Quite true, meedames; dair is nones, but how many tink you lif on Fifth avenue, vere dis club is? So much de more glory to you and to us. Ve goes along, and not only starts our grand benevolences, but ve also imports de beebles who shall profits by dem. Ve thus vill be making of ourselves great and glorious philanthropists, like Dauversière, who, ven de French occupied Canada and had quite a settlement at Quebec, sent over de moneys to found a hospital, not vair it vas needed, but on de island vere Montreal now stands, and vich vas den a howling vilder-nesses. Vas dere anypodies to put in dat hospitals, tink you? No, verily, noddings but wolves, jackals und chipmunks. But dat only showed vat a vonderfuls man he vas, not only to found a hospital, but also to import de beebles to put in it—eh, so!"

"Shall I go on reading, professor?" I asked.

"Ah, do, dear meedames; and you will see how I am affected by de apparel of dose young vimmins who comes to teach de odder young vimmins."

I took still other foolscap sheets, and there I found the professor had described the young ladies, who often came

in full-dress party costume to keep their engagements at the club.

"Oh, meedames, vat you see written expresses not von-haf of vat I feels!" and the professor took out his handkerchief and wiped his mild blue eye. "To tink vimmins mit so leetle on demselves have de heart to come togedder to do tings for de odders. De fust time I saw it I vill be almost saying before I tinks, 'Poor young voman, couldn't your mudder lend you even a shawl or a cape?' Ven de vestern vimmins know vat dey got to do and how dey got to dress in order to be truly philanthropic, dey shiver, maybe, but dey no flinches!"

"Professor, you have been very industrious and have a great deal written for your lectures. What is the next subject you take up?" I asked, greatly amused.

"Ah, meedames, now you comes to vere I am in de greatest deeficulty. I haf got to de subject, 'Vat is de object of de girls' clup, und vat dey teeches!' I knows vat Mees Mettle, Mees Hopper und Mees Denny says is de object. It vill pe to rise up de masses. But, ach Himmel, meedames!" and the poor man clapped both hands to his head and closed tight his watery blue eye. "Ven I does see dem comin' in, sometimes haf an hour, sometimes an hour late (und sometimes I does see dem not comin' at all) und complainin' most of the time dey vill pe heres of how much dey haf to do for nuttings, how leetle de udder vimmins do, who will be on de same committees, und den ven I counts up de cost of de jewels dey have on, round dere neck, und in dere ears, and on dere wrists and fingers, and twinkling in dere hairs, ven I says to myself to rise up the masses—to rise up the masses—but vich way to rise 'em up? Rise 'em up dat way," and the professor pointed toward the sky, "or vill it pe de udder vay dey rise 'em up? Can you tell, meedames?"

I endeavored to express my sympathy with the poor man in his perplexity, but I had to assure him that I was just as much at a loss to determine the direction of the "rise" as himself. I suggested that the final settlement of that question be left to the future, and he agreed to this by uttering his favorite:

"Yah! So, meedames; und now ve vill be coming to vat de working girls' club teechees."

"Well, professor, it is Miss Mettle's idea to teach——"

"But stop, meedames!" exclaimed the professor, "Mees Mettle has not been present von single times dat I haf been heres. Whatsoever her *ideas* vill pe, she teaches by her example dat every von must be absent joost as much as she please."

"Well, professor, that arrangement would work very well if there could be some agreement for both the young ladies and the girls to act together at the same time. But the girls keep coming long after the young ladies have given up, and when they become discouraged and remain away then the young ladies appear and are deeply offended that there are no girls for them to teach."

"Vell, meedames, in the vest ve vill pe tinkin' und vorkin' over dat problem—to see how long de young vimmins can stay away mit profit to demselves and advantage to de undertaking. Mayhaps some grand inventive genius might perpetuate his name and fame to future generations by discovering a mettoad vereby the young vimmins might run a clup and at the same time stay away altogedder from it—eh, so! But hist dere! Vat is dat large noise ve vill pe hearing?"

There was indeed a grand rumpus going on in an adjoining room—sounds like some one thumping and shaking a door. I was about to go and investigate, when Miss

Bullwinkle came hurriedly through the room where Professor Poggenbeek and I were sitting.

"Mrs. Winn," she said, "I have shut up that Mary Sharkey in the wood and coal closet" (for, I must tell the reader, we had two open fireplaces) "and I do not wish you to let her come out for two hours. Her impudence is unendurable!"

"The only way for you to be sure she is kept there that length of time is to stay and see to it yourself, for, by the way she is pounding now, I should think she would have the door down in ten minutes," I answered.

"Pless my soul and pody, Mees Pullwinkle! Vat vill you pe teechings by dis mettoads—eh, so?" and a bewildered, helpless expression appeared on the professor's usually calm features.

"But, meedames, vere is Mees Pullwinkle? She vas heres, and den she vas not heres, all so queak as I vill be vinkings?"

That was true. Miss Bullwinkle lost no time in placing as much space as possible between herself and her adversary, and perhaps it was just as well she did, for in less than ten minutes there was a crash, and immediately Mary Sharkey appeared before us, dancing and shouting with rage. Her face and clothes were covered with coal dust, for she had been sent forward on her face and hands by the closing of the door. She now had her hands full of the black grime, which she was ready to throw at Miss Bullwinkle.

"Eh, so?" said the professor, looking at her over his spectacles with the eyes of a savant encountering an entirely new and rare order of being. "Meedames, dis ber-son vill haf de looks about her of vildness und undomestication."

"I'm not vile nor un—what-you-may-call-it!" ex-

claimed Mary, throwing the coal dust intended for Miss Bullwinkle on the professor.

“Never mind, meedames!” returned the professor, as he saw my efforts at reproving Mary and removing the black from his shirt front and shiny bald pate. “Dis person vill haf done me a serwise mit dis badness, for I vas joost about to haf her sit down und tells vat she learns from de teechings of dis clup, and now dair is no need. I see quite plains she vill haf learned to trow tings—eh, so?”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DISCOMFORTS OF A SECRET ENGAGEMENT.

*"Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night
That in a spleen unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up;
So quick bright things come to confusion."*

WE know for a certainty that Shakespeare was not present at Mrs. Islip's ball and was wholly unacquainted with the experience through which Mr. Grout and Miss Mettle passed, but if he had been he could not have written lines more applicable to the occasion than those quoted above: "*So quick bright things come to confusion.*" What things can more truly be classified among *bright* things than the dream of love, in which our deep-chested hero and his companion were enwrapped when last we were in their society? But alas! they had barely time to agree that the vows they plighted each other should be kept a profound secret before a familiar voice came to their ears as of a fat person laboring up the stairs. Miss Mettle turned pale as she recognized the voice of her offended parent.

"And she is in that state of mind that she will dig to the foundations of the earth or scour the entire globe over but she will find out where I am," Miss Mettle reflected.

She therefore persuaded Mr. Grout very much against his will to leave their retreat, and together they met Mrs. Mettle and Rector Dunraven in the hall.

Mrs. Mettle suppressed her feelings of rage at her daughter's base conduct as far as saying anything was concerned, though she lost no time in taking Mr. Grout off and consigning him to the care of Miss Denny, while she hovered around her daughter and Rector Dunraven, keeping them together by threatening to leave whenever her daughter showed signs of wishing to change the society of the ecclesiastic for that of anyone else.

"Ray," she said the following morning, when they were alone, "how soon shall I be able to send out cards for an announcement party?"

"You mean to announce my engagement?" asked her daughter.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Mettle, severely.

Miss Mettle hesitated while she thought over the pros and cons of admitting her mother into the secret of her engagement, and then she said:

"You can give it as soon as you choose."

"You are engaged, then, you *dear, dear* girl! What a weight, what a responsibility I feel roll off my shoulders. Let me imprint a fond mother's kiss on your brow and salute you as the future Mrs. Bishop Dunraven."

"You cannot salute me as Mrs. Bishop Dunraven, but as Mrs. ex-Congressman Grout," replied her daughter, smiling at the surprise she expected her mother would express.

She had turned her back to her mother to make the above announcement, and after waiting an instant for a reply and receiving none, she looked for the cause.

Mrs. Mettle's emotions were of such an overwhelming nature that she was tottering and would have fallen in a

faint had not her daughter been quick enough to catch her.

"But you told me you wanted to be a bishop's wife," she kept repeating as consciousness returned. Her daughter's only answer was the stony giggle behind which she was accustomed to take refuge when embarrassing questions arose.

On fully recovering from her faint Mrs. Mettle made up her mind just as firmly that the engagement should *never* terminate in marriage as her mind had previously been fixed on the idea that Ray must marry some one.

And certainly the reader will admit there could be no stronger comparison. But both husband and daughter kept her from expressing herself on the subject by repeating her former admiring phrases regarding Mr. Grout.

It is a trying experience to undergo a complete change of sentiment and have one's old views remembered and repeated from time to time. Mrs. Mettle, therefore, while not saying much, did a "power of thinking." She invited the rector to dinner very often, while she arranged to dine away from home whenever she knew Mr. Grout had been invited. She attended confessional regularly, so as to be acquainted with Miss Nevins's plans, as well as to be on hand to counteract influences of an adverse nature that the young women embroiderers and altar scrubbers might seek to throw around him.

When she heard that the reason Mr. Grout gave for wishing a secret engagement was that his fortune was undergoing certain changes which the too hasty announcement of his approaching marriage might affect disastrously, her curiosity was roused to such a pitch she sought a private interview with Mrs. Islip. She returned from this interview in a frame of mind but little removed from insanity. No sleep came to her relief, and in the middle

of the night, as she was tossing to and fro, she asked her husband:

"Tuftus, how many more people twice as extravagant as Ray will our income support?"

"What did you say?" responded her husband, sleepily, and then added on recovering consciousness:

"Don't poke me so viciously."

After Mrs. Mettle repeated her question, he replied:

"One more person twice as extravagant as Ray would send us all to the poorhouse, afoot, without even a wheelbarrow to carry your cedar chest for furs and party dresses. But what makes you ask such a queer question? Have you heard anything unfavorable about our son-in-law elect?"

"How should I hear anything about him? There's nobody that knows except Mrs. Islip, and she does not deign to call. I was just thinking, in case we wished to adopt a child after Ray leaves us."

"Before you think of adopting outsiders, you had better wait and see how many grandchildren you will have who may need adopting."

"I never knew a man who so delighted to trifle with solemn subjects," snapped his wife.

Mrs. Mettle did not find her task made any easier by her interview with Mrs. Islip. She was given information concerning her daughter's fiancé which made her turn cold with apprehension, yet she obtained it in such a manner that she could not use it to any advantage without telling where it was gained. She had succeeded in putting Mrs. Islip on her guard, however, which was an advantage, for Mrs. Islip had a better chance to interfere with the movements of the honorable gentleman. What Mrs. Mettle *could* do was done, as the reader will observe in the following instance.

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"I thought you were going to the football game, Ray," her friend Miss Rounds said.

"I *did* think of it," Miss Mettle replied, "but gave it up."

She did not add as she truthfully might that she gave it up because she waited in vain for Mr. Grout to keep his appointment to take her, but she asked casually:

"Did you have a pleasant time and were many there?"

"Oh, yes," replied her friend, "we had a very exciting game and every one was there—the McDuffys, the Strongs, Mrs. Edgerton, Mrs. Bounce and her son, Miss Denny and Mr. Grout. By the way, some one asked me this afternoon, if I knew that Mr. Grout was engaged to Miss Denny. Is that a fact? Seems to me I have seen them out a great deal together lately."

Miss Mettle replied briefly that she did not know, while if any one had been watching her mother they would have seen her bright black eyes snapping with excitement, knowing as she did that she had been the means of sending Mr. Grout over to Miss Denny's.

The methods Mrs. Islip employed to cause him to miss a number of appointments, were simple but effective. She had Mr. Carter prepare writing and when she had an inkling that her beloved son-in-law was putting extra touches on his toilet preparatory to seeking the home of Miss Mettle she presented herself all smiles and good humor before him, asking that he do this important writing, so important that it could only be trusted to a member of the family, for her. By a judicious reference to the expenses of the impending lawsuit as well as to his highness's current outlays, which were far from trifling, including as they did flowers and confectionery given with the lavish hand befitting the son-in-law of a rich woman, she contrived to extort a gloomy assent to her proposition. But soon she

found the gloomy assent and the position at the desk were only assumed while she was on hand to enforce them. If she was called off, the gloom and the man immediately vanished. One afternoon when she knew he would be more than ever anxious to be present at Miss Mettle's she appeared with writing of extra importance, requiring extra haste in its completion. She informed her dear son-in-law that she would be in her boudoir and when he finished the writing, he might bring it in to her. That was an intimation that she would be in her room with the door open commanding a view of his means of entry and exit, and therefore removing all possibility of flight. A caller was announced shortly after this and feeling sure that her son-in-law would hail this person as a deliverer and manage a successful escape, she said to her grandson:

"Roundout, Mummer Islip has to go downstairs to a caller; now she wants her little boy to sit here," and she indicated a chair taking in a view down the hall of the door to his father's apartment, "and if that door opens press this button so mummer may know when Papa Grout is leaving."

"Ess, I *will*, Mummer Islip, and Papa Grout s'an't leave n'out you say he s'all." And the beautiful curls bobbed emphatically, and the little fellow was as much excited as though he had been asked to watch for a piratical ship in mid ocean.

He sat in the chair indicated by his grandmother until she had been gone about a minute and he commenced to hear certain movements from his father's room, then his excitement increased so he could not sit still. He got up and tiptoed down the hall. Yes, that was the opening of his father's upper drawer and the little fellow jumped softly up and down as he said to himself:

"He's bussing his hairs and he sinks he's goin' all evwy

bit away n'out Mummer Islip knowing, but he s'an't! he s'an't! he s'an't!"

Presently the door the boy was watching opened very softly and Mr. Grout issued forth. He was so occupied in his noiseless motions he did not see the lad and the first intimation of his presence came in feeling his coat tails clutched and in hearing:

"You s'an't go, Mummer Islip says! you s'an't go!"

"You rascal, you will tear my coat!" hissed Mr. Grout, for he did not want to speak loud. "Let go and I will give you some nice candy."

"I don't want any candy, besides, you owe me for six times."

Mrs. Islip below heard with great satisfaction, a series of rollings and tumblings, then her grandson appeared at the parlor door half crying and saying between his sobs:

"Papa Grout he just hate (hurt) me awful."

"Did he, my precious lamb?" cried Mrs. Islip, opening her arms for the boy to run into. "And what have we here? One of Papa Grout's coat tails? Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ess, Papa Grout fought he was going to get off n'out your lettin' him; but I said he s'an't and now of course he couldn't!"

We have it from the best authority that "the course of true love never did run smooth," and if the *not* running smooth proves that there is *true* love, surely the affection existing between Mr. Grout and Miss Mettle must have been monstrously true; for to say that it did not run smooth conveys but a feeble idea of the multitudinous snares and snags that interrupted its onward progress.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE CLOISTER RECEPTION.

MISS METTLE found herself supported through many of the discomforts of her secret engagement by the thought of her mother's disapproval; but her equanimity was not equal to the strain of being disappointed by her lover on public occasions and Miss Denny receiving the credit of being engaged, which belonged to herself. The reception to be given in honor of the opening of the building, alluded to from time to time, which Rector Dunraven was having erected for his philanthropic work, and called the cloister, was an event to which Miss Mettle had been looking forward, with the rest of her set. On this occasion Miss Mettle thought perhaps Miss Rounds might have her eyes opened as to whom Mr. Grout really was engaged. That is to say, Miss Mettle was intending to have it appear that at least he was paying *her* marked attention.

Through the elaborate lectures of his revered holiness, the Rector Mortimer Augustus Dunraven, as well as through the discussions of Miss Nevins and the rest of the ecclesiastic's feminine admirers, the gay fashionable world had been kept in just the right frame of mind to be interested in the completion of the building and anxious to be included either on the board of trustees, list of patrons and patronesses, or at least given an invitation to the formal opening.

Now, if my reader would like to know what course the rector pursued in order to keep these people in the right

frame of mind, I would like to refer them to the above mentioned lectures, where they will observe the great prominence he gives to the present deplorable effect of city life on man and womankind and the mysterious effect that will be wrought upon that condition by a season of cloister life. Vagueness, mystery—we all know how much larger and more portentous objects look with a mist enveloping them—a dog takes on the proportions of a lion; a board fence the impassable ramparts of a frowning fort. To Miss Nevins and her afflicted sisterhood suffering from cold feet, weak nerves and contrary relatives, whose mild objections to the barked shins, and black and blue spots, the result of altar scrubblings, were construed into persecutions, the prospect of such a place as the cloister to which to retire seemed delightful.

In conversation with these young ladies a stranger received confused ideas of the benefits to be derived from such a life, as a man declared who had engaged in a long talk on the subject. His forehead was one mass of wrinkles and he slapped his knee, saying:

“Bless my soul! I can’t make out whether it’s a gymnasium, a convent, a sanitarium, a natatorium, an Indian bungalow, a Grecian lyceum, an Egyptian portico, a Moorish mosque, a Turkish play house, a Catholic conventicle, a Syrian shrine, or an English club house!”

But it was this uncertainty that gave piquancy to the whole affair and caused the gay fashionables to order elaborate toilettes for the occasion, and the event occurring on the day before Christmas, a gift of some kind was also deemed indispensable to a correct outfit. These gifts might have been of smaller value, had not Mrs. Islip’s maid on her afternoon out, while in conference with Mrs. Griffin’s maid, found that the latter was intending to give a bust of herself worth three hundred dollars, while Mrs.

Islip was only intending to give pieces of silver worth one hundred and fifty dollars. When Mrs. Islip heard how nearly she came to being overtaken by the calamity of being outdone by a lady whom she was far from holding in high esteem she ordered an entire service in sterling silver lined with gold and costing eighteen hundred dollars. Her maid then being able to go abroad "and hold up her head," as she said, not only held up her head, but also the superior generosity of her mistress, to the great profit of all dealers in silverware and church and altar furnishings and antique bric-à-brac.

That Christmas-tide poor relatives sent their notes of thanks for gifts of chalices, crucifixes, candelabra, cro-siers and the like to the wrong person. They should have been addressed to Mrs. Islip's maid, for it was owing to her influence that the gay fashionables had an extra supply of these articles on hand, which must be disposed of in some way and what more delightfully satisfactory way than to feel that one has been thrifty and benevolent at one and the same time?

The Rector had prepared a very elaborate order of exercise, as was his custom. There had been erected an impromptu throne in the largest room in the building, arranged by covering a high-backed chair with cloth of gold and making a canopy of the same material to hang over it. Upon this elevation, his revered holiness, the Rector Mortimer Augustus Dunraven, seated himself, and the color of his surroundings together with the naturally bilious shade of his complexion, made one think of the object of worship which Aaron set up for the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, the difference between them being that Aaron's calf had not the temerity to set *himself* up for an object of worship.

A procession was formed of the various under priests,

acolytes, choir boys and incense bearers, arrayed in gorgeous vestments, the bills for which remained unpaid, a fact that doubtless helped to add to the bilious shade of the rector's complexion. This company was to make the circuit of the place singing, waving their censers and playing upon the cornet, the flute, the sackbut, the psaltery and the dulcimer, instruments of ancient worship which the rector had introduced because of their picturesque appearance, notwithstanding the fact that the music they evolved was atrocious.

When the procession had completed its first circuit, although it had been formed half an hour late, there were so few of the gay fashionables present that the rector gave the signal to make the circuit a second time, as he did not wish to waste the sweetness of his discourse on the desert air of few listeners. And right here the author would beg leave to make a digression in order to state for the benefit of those aspiring to rank with the gay fashionables that it is impossible for a person to consider him or herself eligible for such a lofty station in life unless able to pledge one's self to be uniformly and ever-increasingly late wherever invited. There was an agreement made between two ladies once upon a time to meet at a given hour and place. They both arrived on time and one expressed surprise that the other had been so prompt. The other replied in an astonished manner:

"Why should you be surprised that I am here on time? Did you not know that I was a lady?"

This matter of being late in keeping engagements is one of the many distinguishing marks between the *true* gentleman and lady and the gay fashionable. By the time the procession started on its second round the number of finely polished carriages and horses with gold and silver mounted harnesses drawn up before the carved stone en-

trance and the roadway forming the approach was rapidly increasing, so that one was made to think of billows of shiny blackness.

Quite a disturbance was made in the arrangement of these billows after the commencement of the rector's discourse by the appearance of a span of horses showing hard driving in the foam covering their breasts and sides.

"Faix, man! drive on and let me be afther havin' a chance at the steps," called the driver of this carriage, whom we recognize to be Mrs. Mettle's coachman.

In order to explain the lateness of this arrival it will be necessary to narrate a few occurrences that transpired in the Mettle household during the morning, previous to the hour mentioned for the cloister reception, which was high noon, the rector's high church proclivities extending even to his choice of hour for this magnificent event.

There had been time enough and the occasion was considered one of so much importance that both Mrs. and Miss Mettle had ordered Paris gowns from a rival of Worth's. That gentleman had received new ideas of Americans and their requirements after reading Mrs. Mettle's order for the dresses, which ran as follows:

"Please send two gowns of a gorgeous, high ritualistic coloring, to be worn at an event combining elements philanthropic, spiritual and fashionable" (in one note she had written fashionable first, but she thought the order looked better reversed). "One dress" (and she gave her daughter's measurements) "I should like of such a character that it might be worn by a bishop's wife at the induction of her husband into holy orders as well as for the event above mentioned."

With the dresses Mrs. Mettle received the accompanying reply, which being interpreted, read:

"MADAM: The *ingenuity* of man is finite as well as the rest of him. I have tried to do the best I could in making the combinations—philanthropic, spiritual and fashionable—you required for the *one* event. I felt my reason would give way if I taxed myself to make any more combinations so as to take in the two occasions you mention. If you are satisfied with these dresses and should care to have me attempt another for the solemn and imposing ceremonial you mention I am *sure* you would never regret it. I have the faculty, my customers tell me, of putting more depth of feeling and variety of expression into the sweep of my train dresses than any other living *artiste modistique*, and I would enter into the task of constructing—I might say creating—such a gown with the abandon and *en rapport* of *true* genius."

The time had not arrived to answer this epistle but only to try on the artist's first productions. This she did with a heavy heart, for affairs were assuming a dismal turn for consummating her hopes. She felt she had struggled bravely, but she was not sure that she was not to be overcome. She had not been able to interrupt the arrangements made between her daughter and Mr. Grout for attending the reception together, and Tuftus having found out how she had sent him off for the football game, had forbidden any repetition of such proceedings.

"*N'importe*, Madame," her new French maid said to her as she saw her dejected looks. "It must not be *dat vous regardez si pensive si trieste*. It makes wrong *de color* of *dis robe*."

"It's of no consequence any more about *what* color my dress is. I shall soon be robed for the tomb—the sooner the better. I have nothing to live for, with my only child about to throw herself away on a beggar, and my

husband turned against me and plotting with my daughter to hasten her destruction."

"Oh, madame, *comment* horrible! *Voilà une larme!* it goes to make a stain on de front breaths—better death dan une calamity, comme ça!"

"I wish I might weep in peace without your jumping so as to scare the wits out of me!" replied Mrs. Mettle, her annoyance assuaging her grief. "I have a great mind to dip the whole gown in brine!"

But there being no time to carry out this dreadful threat, Mrs. Mettle submitted to having the remainder of her toilet made in silence.

It was a sure proof of her spirits being very low that she seemed to derive not one gleam of satisfaction from her completed attire, wherein the man of genius had arranged effects in colors, and curves in drapery and peculiarities in design to satisfy the requirements of the occasion. She had an extra supply of cosmetic put on her nose to obliterate all trace of previous emotion and to allow of a little in the future, if it was necessary, without betraying her by a tell-tale redness.

Perhaps it was due to the fact of her spending too much time in this way, that, inquiring the hour, she hastened into her carriage without her present. Certain it was that her coachman had driven half way to her destination before she recollected her omission and called for a return.

She would not listen to the footman's going for the parcel, although she could have told him the exact spot where he could have found it. Neither would she allow James or Katie to go upstairs for her. Something seemed to impel her to go herself, and when she got to her room, to stop and listen for sounds from her daughter's room. There was no necessity of any long pause to be

assured that some one was there, for excited footsteps were pacing up and down, and Mrs. Mettle determined to seek an explanation.

She found her daughter with a pair of scissors cutting up a handkerchief, her course across the room strewn with the remnants of a felt hat, a towel, and a silk apron. The points of her scissors coming very near her dress, Mrs. Mettle exclaimed:

"Take care there, Ray, you will ruin your dress!"

"What difference would that make?" returned the younger woman almost fiercely. "Are not my plans ruined, my wishes unheeded, and myself exposed to ridicule? I tell you I could cut up this dress, those curtains and this carpet, and my feelings not be half expressed then."

"Oh, well, Ray dear, don't try to express them in that way," replied her mother, whose teeth were almost chattering from fear of her daughter in her present mood. "Think how expensive it would be, and how much you need the money for the girls' club!"

"Do you know any reason for my disappointment this morning, mother?" asked Miss Mettle, looking at her relative out of her cold, steely eyes as though she was using them for chisels to pry out of her mother's inner consciousness something which should throw light on the subject.

"Indeed, I do not, Ray! Just as true as I'm standing here. I have known heretofore, but this time, believe me, I have no idea? But what are you doing?"

She asked this question in view of her daughter's beginning to take her dress off and unfasten the jewels from her arms and neck.

"I am going to bed!"

"Oh, nonsense, to bed! and have Miss Denny coming

over and condoling with you and then hinting that you're suffering from a broken heart! You know as well as I do that she will," urged Mrs. Mettle.

"What can I do then?" asked Miss Mettle helplessly.

"Get on your things and look your very best and go with me. Laugh and talk as though you were having a good time, even if you are not. Perhaps your fiancé will be there to explain his delinquency."

"My fiancé, indeed. He is that *no longer*! I vow that if he was the last man on the earth and unless I married him I should return to dust as a spinster——"

"Oh, Ray, don't!" sobbed her mother, interrupting the sentence. "Don't unnerve us by drawing such terrible pictures of the future. You are not—and never will be a——but I *can't* speak the name."

It was a comfort to Miss Mettle to have her mind distracted by the hurry and bustle of the next few minutes. Mrs. Mettle's French maid and Katie, and even Mrs. Mettle herself, assisted in rearranging the disturbed toilet, and together mother and daughter entered the waiting carriage and the coachman received orders to drive his fastest.

"You will probably make it all up when you see Mr. Grout!" Mrs. Mettle said, more with a view to urging her daughter to cherish her feelings of animosity than really with any faith in what she said.

"Indeed, the engagement is broken, mother, and nothing will ever make it up! I do not intend to listen to any excuse that may be made!"

That was about all the conversation that occurred on the drive between the Mettles' home and the cloister.

"And ye's niver seed nater speed than that, Mike, me b'y!" exclaimed Timothy, the coachman, proudly, after the ladies had left the carriage.

"Very nate, indeed!" returned Mike, "but you've nigh busted your hosses to make it!"

"Not at all, at all!" replied Timothy, "if I drive on t'other side of the building out of the wind."

In order to do this the waves of shiny blackness, made up of the many carriages already assembled, had to be breasted, and in some cases their drivers roused to speech of an uncomplimentary nature.

Mrs. Mettle and her daughter were almost the last to make their appearance, but their attire was of such a striking character they were considered by no means the least important, if one might judge from the observation they attracted.

"Oh, Ray, I feel so mortified to think we did not bring a larger present, or else have what we did bring done up in a larger box," Mrs. Mettle whispered as they were being ushered in preceded by a tall, imposing functionary, attired in powdered wig and bright continental regimentals, and bearing a large silver waiter, almost lost upon which was the inkstand Mrs. Mettle had grudgingly bought.

"It would not have made any difference, you see, what kind of a box it had been done up in," returned her daughter, looking toward the long table upon which the rich gifts were arranged and seeing their present unrolled and placed on exhibition with the others.

The ladies' rich brocades and velvets rustled and their jewels tinkled as they sank from their seats on to their knees, ostensibly for their devotions, but in reality to give their feelings of mortification a little time to pass away.

The rector, Mortimer Augustus Dunraven, was in the midst of his address. And that was as full of over-soul and under-soul and betwixt-and-between-soul as ever. If any one of a metaphysical turn of mind had cared to undertake to ponder the problem why the rector had so little

soul himself there might have been great help in arriving at a conclusion in considering the fact of his writing so much of his soul out on paper for the benefit of his female admirers; consequently there could not be much left for other emergencies. Besides this ingredient, the rector's speech abounded in laudations. His congregation, his wardens, his vestrymen, their ingenuity, their perseverance, their munificence, their untiring regard for himself, all received such touching mention, and the glory of the erection and completion of the building was so delicately yet emphatically laid at their door that at the close of the exercises Mr. Islip slapped his friend Denny on the shoulder and said:

"I declare, old fellow, I'm rather proud than otherwise of this enterprise!"

"Why, yes; so am I," returned Mr. Denny. "Let me see—was it you or I who started this thing? Ha, ha, ha! te, he, he!"

"I guess the honor belongs to both of us," returned Mr. Islip. "You remember when we were returning from Jersey City, where we had expected to see that prize fight which the police interrupted, I said we ought to have some place where we could retire from the world for a season, and you agreed with me, eh, Denny? And here we are celebrating the completion of that 'long-felt want,' that boon to the weary, careworn spirit which our esteemed rector has been talking about so eloquently."

"Ho, ho, ho! ha, ha, ha! te, he, he! Jove, Islip, but you're a bright one!"

There were other wardens and vestrymen who seemed to find it equally pleasant to have the honor of suggesting the enterprise and carrying it out laid at their door, but Mr. Bowman did not belong to the number. Mr. Bowman said he was a plain, old-fashioned man, and

hence he'd been brought up to believe that the best place for a man or woman was in a home of some kind, either their own or some one's else, and he added he did not know that he could have taken time to be present if he had not been very short of money for the Christmas tree at the Mission next week.

Mr. Denny handed him fifty cents. Mr. Bowman kept the fifty cents in his open palm, and said:

"Now, brethren, let us draw up around this table, where is an eighteen-hundred-dollar silver set and a three-hundred-dollar bust and a five-hundred-dollar crucifix and a thousand-dollar tankard, and all the other costly presents (not including the inkstand). You can look at them first, and from them gaze at the fifty cents in my palm. I'll place a quarter by its side, as that will be the entire amount I have succeeded in raising by coming up here, and you will have as fine an object lesson—I need not mention on what subject—as could be desired."

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All during the address, the music which followed and the gradual disappearance of the shiny black waves outside the building, as their owners stepped into them and were rolled homeward, Mrs. Mettle had been grappling with the difficulties of her position. Hers was a mind that was seldom at peace, but just now there might be said to be raging within more of a tempest in a teapot than usual. It was not soothing to her perturbed feelings to pass around the table on which the gifts were placed, and her daughter suggested their immediate return. But neither did she care to do that.

Miss Denny came up and said to Miss Mettle:

"I am surprised to see you here alone!"

"She is *not* alone," returned the mother quickly, "I am with her. Do you mean to say I count for nothing?"

"Oh, by no means, Mrs. Mettle. I was only thinking of her usual masculine escort and wondering why he was not with her," replied Miss Denny, laughing.

"Do you mean Kipp Grassey?" innocently asked Mrs. Mettle.

"No, I do not mean Kipp Grassey. Ray knows whom I mean."

"But I do not see why it should be any more surprising that he, if you mean Mr. Grout, is not with me than that he is not with you," returned Ray coldly.

"Oh, you should not? Perhaps it is not any more surprising. I did not mention the subject with any intention of making you mad. But if you *will* get mad, why, you will, I suppose," and Miss Denny flounced off to talk to some one else.

All this time, amid the waves of mortification, doubt, apprehension and longing that were surging in Mrs. Mettle's breast she kept her eye (perhaps a seaman would have called it her weather eye) on the movements of the rector. She managed it so that he should not come up and speak to them till nearly every one had departed; then she greeted him with great cordiality and begged to be shown over the building. The rector was delighted to do this, as there were a great many other things beside crucifixes and tankards and silver dinner sets and inkstands and candelabra necessary for the comfortable furnishing of his cloister, and perhaps Mrs. Mettle might be moved to offer to get some of them. There was a feeling of embarrassment between himself and Miss Mettle which wore off like mist under the sun of Mrs. Mettle's genial prattle. The cloister contained, like its namesake of the middle ages, long corridors, some of them with one side open to an inner courtyard for summer use and others entirely covered, for winter weather. The ladies remarked upon

the tessellated pavements forming the floors of all these corridors, and the rector replied:

"Yes, I expect to come up and bless these pavements every week, and then the cloisterettes, as I propose to call the female inmates of the cloister, can pursue their investigations on the subject of altar cleansing and scrubbing the same here as if they were at home."

The views from the windows of the different rooms were not particularly striking or novel, as they all opened on a courtyard. There were no outside apertures, though there were false blinds, which kept the building from having a singular appearance.

"I think I will come up here myself!" exclaimed Miss Mettle.

The rector approved of this resolution, but Mrs. Mettle was in despair. While Ray was earnestly talking over the necessary outfit for a residence in the cloister the idea came into her mind that a good way out of her trouble was to signify to the rector that there was no time like the present for him to make the proposition that he had been holding himself prepared to make for some time past. She found an opportunity to suggest this without her daughter's knowledge while passing through the hall from one room to another. The rector, however, did not act on her suggestion, and they were fast arriving at the part of the building where they commenced, with only one room left for them to be shown over. Mrs. Mettle was feeling desperate. Surely the moment had come for her to act speedily and with decision. While the rector and her daughter were pursuing their friendly conversation she turned on the gentleman a look full of meaning and left the room. Miss Mettle did not hear, but a certain little grating sound of the key turning in the lock made a profound impression on the rector.

"Well," he thought to himself, "I probably never should have arrived at that frame of mind when I should have made the proposal without some such impelling action. I may as well take advantage of the opportunity thus offered."

The rector was sorry that his motions were hampered by the richly embroidered vestments which his vanity had induced him to wear longer than ceremony required. For it would make his movements uncertain about getting down and up from his knees. But a man of the rector's high-church views would not think of making a proposal other than from a posture.

Probably if he had not been so solicitous about not soiling and not straining his robe he would have given more thought to what he was saying and not have startled Miss Mettle by his abruptness. As it was, he selected a spot because it was the cleanest, which happened to be at Miss Mettle's left side, nearer her back, and, dropping into a kneeling posture with such care as he could, he said, grasping Miss Mettle's hand:

"Will you be my wife?"

"Oh, mercy, what did you say? How you frightened me!" exclaimed Miss Mettle. "I thought you had a sudden attack of something. But what did you say?"

"I asked you if you would be my wife?" returned the rector, still glued to the floor.

"Oh, thank you, no; not to-day; or, that is to say, I believe not. If you don't mind, I will wait."

"Oh, certainly," returned the rector, struggling to his feet, "just as you wish."

They advanced to the door and tried the knob. It was locked fast, but after turning it several times there came Mrs. Mettle's voice through the keyhole:

"My dear rector, can I make the announcement?"

"Madam, your daughter has refused me," returned the church dignitary with some heat.

"I only asked him to wait," explained Miss Mettle.

"Ray," returned her mother sternly, "the time has passed for dilly-dallying and shilly-shallying. I shall not turn the key in this door and let you out until you give the rector a decided 'yes.'"

Was there any resisting the determined resolution of the little woman at the door? Both Miss Mettle and the rector thought not and surrendered at discretion. The following day the overjoyed mother issued cards for the announcement party to be held one week after the holidays.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONTRASTING SCENES.

MR. BOWMAN'S object lesson presented to his brethren in the last chapter is deserving of attentive consideration by philanthropists of every description, fair or belonging to the sterner sex, by philanthropic slap-dashers or those displaying more deliberation and sense in their gifts. In order to emphasize the truths he wished to impart, as well as to furnish a brave contrast to those scenes of august pomp and munificent expenditure, the author feels constrained in this chapter to take her readers to that humble work of beneficence already visited and known as the "Mission of the Holy Madonna in Heaven."

"Willie, my dear boy, you must not use the green so freely," Mrs. Thatcher called out the day before Christmas as she appeared at the door of the room where several of the children were busy winding laurel and evergreen for decorations. "Look here at the way Johnnie is making his bundle last and the long string there is of it."

"Yes, Mamma Thatch, it is long but it is very lean. Now, I don't *like* lean Christmas greens."

"But if you don't have them that way," returned Lane Johnnie gravely, "they won't go round."

"Didn't God grow enough greens for us this year, Mamma Thatch; he has other years?" asked Willie.

Mrs. Thatcher sighed as she thought of how many things besides greens had ceased to grow as plentifully as in past years for them. But not wishing her depression to be contagious she said brightly:

"Yes, Willie, God has grown plenty of greens; there is never any leanness or meanness in the way He prepares His bounties for His children, bless His holy name, but perhaps He has noticed in the years past we have not used His gifts for His glory as much as we ought and so this year He allows us to be pinched that we may be reminded of our duty."

"That's so for me and Willie, Mamma Thatch!" exclaimed Lame Johnnie, "but you don't need reminding, for you are always doing everything for His glory."

Mrs. Thatcher bent over and kissed Johnnie's pale, sober face.

"Perhaps not everything as He would have me," she answered.

"Oh, yes, I'm sure you do everything for His glory and——"

Lame Johnnie paused, uncertain whether to continue.

"And what, Johnnie?" asked Mrs. Thatcher tenderly, for the boy's remarks were oftentimes quaint and full of a wisdom beyond his years.

"And to please Mr. Bowman; and surely God would want him pleased when he does so much for us. But I tell you, Mamma Thatch, what *he* does is nothing to what *I'm* going to do when I get to be a man and my hip stops paining me. I'm going to be a policeman and earn lots of money, mor'n twenty-five cents a week" (that is what he received for various little duties, "maybe a whole dollar! And I'm going to give it all to you. Then I'm going to watch over you night and day with a club."

"Maybe you'd let it fall on her an' n'en it would hate (hurt) her!" chimed in Willie.

"No, I wouldn't, Willie Crosby," replied Johnnie indignantly. "If I let it fall it would be on such little boys as you, who use more green than they are told. Look

how thick you are making your string after Mamma Thatcher told you not to!"

"Be careful, children!" cried Mrs. Thatcher, as she disappeared, in answer to calls for direction and guidance in other parts of the building.

There was hurry and bustle everywhere, more so on account of a Christmas tree having been sent in just at the last moment by a neighboring saloon keeper, the one by the way, who supplied Mr. Crosby with his soul-destroying beverages. The man probably patted himself on the back and informed all his intimate friends of his benevolence. A Christmas tree for the privilege of helping a man lose his immortal soul! Surely that is a bargain to make all the devils in hell laugh!

There was no money to buy trimmings for the tree, so Mrs. Thatcher put on her things and called on several ladies of the "Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven," to enquire if they could help her. They gladly promised. They would send tree ornaments and toys, plenty of them, if she wanted.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bowman, coming in to look around before it was dark. "You have a rare collection of glassware and tinsel on that tree now, haven't you?"

"Hush; don't let any of the children hear you making fun," replied Mrs. Thatcher.

"Well, I never saw such a number of one-legged and one-winged cherubs in my life before. Why, I do not think," he continued after going carefully around, "you have one single whole, entire, unbroken, fresh-looking ornament on the tree, have you?"

"Well, yes, there is the pop corn," replied Mrs. Thatcher.

"And that you provided yourself. It's enough to extract

profanity from a parson! If I had a camera I would have pictures of it struck off to send to every one in the church. And then to think of the table loaded with extravagant, senseless gifts at the cloister yesterday. You should have been there to have seen them!"

"Thank you, no. It is hard enough for me to maintain a Christ-like, forgiving spirit, and see as much as I do. I would not dare undertake any greater burden by seeing more," replied Mrs. Thatcher.

"How are the toys? Have you looked over them? I suppose they are similar to the ornaments?"

"I have not had time to look at many of them," replied Mrs. Thatcher evasively.

Who shall be able to estimate the good from Christmas joys to people whose lot in life is full of so much sorrow? Mrs. Thatcher believed in Christmas so thoroughly that she created an atmosphere of expectation which permeated every nook and cranny of the buildings and filled the hearts of old and young—a kind of divine expectancy which was on the lookout not so much for the "loaves and fishes" as for the spiritual blessings which first came to the world on Christmas day.

If it had not been for this hold that Mrs. Thatcher had on the hearts of the people, the enterprise would have suffered during the past months of neglect and hardships. But, as it was, her mothers' class appreciated that, when the funds were so low there could no sewing be given out, they were receiving what money could not buy when they received the love and sympathy and the words of comfort and warning that Mrs. Thatcher gave to each one as she needed, and their numbers never grew less.

"Ah, she has been sech a comfort to me!" exclaimed Widow Browsen, after one of the mothers' meetings, speaking to her neighbor, Mrs. Flippis, about Mrs. Thatcher.

"Sech a comfort! If she hadn't done anything more for me than to learn me to feel whin I could nowadays git anything but taters to eat that they were the healthiest, best food possible, so much better than the hunger bread the poor starving Russians have to live on, made of ground weeds and tree bark thickened wid sand, I should be terrible grateful. But there's no end to the good lessons she learns us. I don't get made cross and snappish by my work since she has told us how the money we get for our work is the poorest part of the good it brings us. That we ought to learn patience and a lot of other things from jest simple washin' and ironin' and scrubbin'. And since it's been brought to my notice I find it's a blessed thing to be on the lookout to see what new grace the new day's trials will help us to grow. This morning when Katie upset the dust pan in my kettle of starch I come mighty nigh not havin' anything grow but a box on Katie's ear and a bad crop of hard names. But as soon as I got 'Oh you——' out I stopped short off and I jest learnt the best lesson in forbearance you ever see!"

At last the time came for the children and their parents to assemble for the Christmas tree. Mr. Powman was lighting the last little red candle on the tiptop of the pyramid of green as the doors were opened and a chorus of "oh, how pitty!" and "ah, how splendid!" rewarded his efforts.

Lame Johnnie's eyes beamed and his sober face was lit up by a rare smile.

"Isn't that beautiful, Mamma Thatch?" he asked, grasping her hand. "Do you think the golden candlestick in the New Jerusalem will be ahead of it?"

"I'd most as soon have some of dose pitty candles as God's stars, only p'aps dey'd go out sooner," cried a little five-year-old lassie.

"When I'm a man," said Willie Crosby resolutely, "I'm going to have a Kismiss tree every day."

"Oh, Willie, may I come?" "and I?" "and I?" asked one and another of the children, who heard this resolution and thought how delightful such a state of affairs would be.

"I don't know whether you could or not; p'aps you'd be dead," returned the practical boy.

"Oh, well, den dey'd have something a great deal better dan Christmus trees. Mamma Thatch says dey'd have Jesus, and she says if it hadn't been for Him we would not have had any Christmus trees, nor nuffin'."

"Come, children, attention this way!" said Mrs. Thatcher. "Let us have your carol!"

All together they sang Mrs. Eliot's beautiful hymn:

*There came a little Child to earth
Long ago,
And angels of God proclaimed His birth
High and low;*

*Out on the night so calm and still
Their song was heard,
For they knew the Child on Bethlehem's hill
Was Christ the Lord.*

*And far away in a goodly land,
Fair and bright,
Children with crowns of glory stand,
Rob'd in white,*

*They sing how the Lord of that world so fair
A child was born,
And that they might crowns of glory wear
Wore crown of thorn;*

*And in mortal weakness, in want and pain
Came forth to die,
That children of earth might ever reign
With Him on high*

*And ever more in their robes most fair
And undefiled,
Those ransomed children His praise declare
Who was once a Child.*

Perhaps heaven can give us sweeter melodies and diviner strains, but it would be hard to conceive of how there could be, even among the heavenly choir, voices that could exceed in sweetness our children's voices. May it not be heaven that lies close about us in our infancy expressing itself through them?

So thought good Elijah Bowman as he made excuse to get behind the tree, or turned around in some way so the children should not see him wipe the tears away. After the singing there was more jollity and laughter, the decrepit state of the ornamented cherubs calling forth the good-natured remark:

"Next time Mamma Thatch wants me to sing 'I want to be an angel,' I'm goin' to add, 'but not a broken-winged one nor a one-legged one,'" cried a bright little girl.

"Why, Mamma Thatch, I fought that gilt ball was round when I sat in front," said a younger brother of Willie Crosby. "But jess fink! it ain't a ball nor it ain't round!"

"Well, then, what ith it?" lisped a flaxen-haired girl. "What ith it if it ithn't a ball nor thumthing round?"

"I don't know," returned the boy.

"Why, ith's a thell; ha! ha! ha! couldn't you tell that?"

"A sell!" repeated the boy. "I fought sells weren't

good. I don't b'lieve Mamma Thatch would have sells for Christmas. I must ask her——"

But before he had a chance to propound his question on the morality of sells for Christmas, Mr. Bowman had begun the distribution of the toys. They were all carefully wrapped up in paper and Mrs. Thatcher requested the children not to undo them until at home, but, alas, their curiosity was not equal to the strain. They felt of them, trying to guess from their shape what they were, till the paper gave way and then the joy and laughter was changed into sighs and tears.

"Mamma Thatch, my elephant hasn't any tusks, nor trunks, nor nussin'!" exclaimed a four-year-old coming up with big, salt, bitter tears standing in his eyes and his upper lip trembling with emotion.

"Well, I wouldn't mind if it was nothing but an elephant," exclaimed the boy's elder sister, "but here's my dolly—no nose—only one arm—half her hair gone—and I expected to love her, like as how she was as she oughter be. Oh, I can't do it," bursting into tears, "I can't do it! I wouldn't mind the hair, but that hole, where the nose oughter be, is too much, too much!"

Mr. Bowman looked helplessly around as the number of the poor little objects of woe increased. How he wished he could say "Never mind; to-morrow I'll bring you up span, brand new toys, twice as big and twice as fine as anything you ever saw before in your life!" Yet he knew he could not. He had spent as much as he could possibly afford now.

But Mrs. Thatcher's great support at this juncture was Lame Johnnie. He was around everywhere, wiping away tears and trying to be general comforter—telling this boy, who was leaning against the wall in the silent abandonment of grief, caused by the dashing of high hopes

in finding a pair of roller skates with a couple of the rollers gone, "perhaps they could find some rollers round somewhere, or perhaps Mamma Thatch would loan him a couple of casters from the beds." When life put on a brighter aspect for this one, then Lame Johnnie went to another, who was roaring with all his might over a steam engine with a piston and a crank gone. He soothed this perturbed spirit by promising to make a better piston and crank than the steam engine had at first. And he meant what he said—loving, helpful Johnnie. It was not his fault that he failed to keep his promise. He had managed to bring at least a ray of comfort to all the disappointed ones and they were going home, sniffing quietly, only the remnants of their grief remaining. The boy with the jointed map, out of which one or two countries were missing, changed his mind about lighting a bon-fire with the offending residue, and concluded, with Johnnie's help, to try and supply the wanting pieces by those of homemade manufacture.

"Here, Johnnie," cried Mr. Bowman, who had been going through empty boxes to see that everything was distributed, "here is something you might give to that boy who had to take the storybook with the last five chapters gone."

"Oh, yes, sir, that will be very good; I know Jack will like that toy pistol. But first let me see if it is all right."

Lame Johnnie bent over the murderous weapon. Like everything else, it was broken, but had been carelessly left loaded. When he commenced to work at it the rusty trigger snapped, exploding the charge, and part entered the boy's forehead just over his right eye.

"Oh, Johnnie, my darling boy," cried Mrs. Thatcher, "I thought I had hidden that pistol where no one would find it."

"That comes of being a stupid, blundering man!" groaned Mr. Bowman, as he bore Lame Johnnie in his arms and laid him gently on a lounge in Mrs. Thatcher's room.

Before the doctor could get there Johnnie opened his eyes and said feebly:

"Don't cry, Mamma Thatch; don't cry. My head don't hurt me near so much as your tears do."

"Can I move you, Johnnie?" asked Mr. Bowman, noticing a restlessness in the sufferer.

"Ah, sir, moving won't do no good. It's just come over me how I was a-going to take care of Mamma Thatch, and now if I am taken away who will——"

"I will, Johnnie," replied Mr. Bowman solemnly; "that is, if she will let me."

"I mean for always, sir," returned Johnnie.

"So do I, Johnnie," returned Mr. Bowman.

"Mamma Thatch, he means for always, and I am going; won't you say 'Yes'?"

It was a solemn betrothal. They knelt hand in hand before the dying boy. He lay with his eyes closed for some time. Finally he opened them and while a beautiful smile lit up his grave features he said:

"Kiss me good-bye, for Jesus has come to take me home. I'm happier than I ever was before."

CHAPTER XXX.

PROFESSOR POGGENBEEK AGAIN.

"Ah, so, meedames!" exclaimed Professor Poggenbeek, coming in after Christmas, "I will be seeing dat you are surprised to observe dat I am here yet?"

"Yes, professor," I replied, smiling, "I thought you were to have left the city before Christmas."

"Yah, so, dat vill be vat I was t'inkin' to does; but den a wariety of times I comes here to t'ink and rite down all dose immortal t'o'ts dat vill be surgings trou my large brains and I found nopoddys to let me in. I den concludes to wait till after Christmas, ven I vill be ables to carry home mit me vun deescription of de correct mannair of spending dat day in a girls' clup; and also, perhaps, if it vill be no secret, you might consent to tell vy de rooms were closed so many days."

"Oh, certainly, professor, I will tell you why I was out, if you will promise not to say anything about it while you are here. Perhaps you may profit by the experience."

"Ah, meedames, you are too good! my vord and honor as a gentlemans I vill nevair say von t'ings of vat you tells me."

"The young ladies heard of an association of working girls' clubs and they wished to belong. One of the conditions on which membership depends was that the club be self-supporting, so I was commissioned to visit all the girls who had attended this place and find out how it would be about their supporting themselves."

"But, meedames," exclaimed the professor, his usually mild blue eye glowing with indignation, "how could you countenance anyt'ing so monstrous, so prepost'rous, so intolerables! De vorkin' girl in a self-supportin' clup! Why, meedames, my blood do absolutely boil at de t'o't! Just t'ink how independent she vill be! De young vimmins can no more clothe her in dere garmints bought dis day vas a year and so go to dere papas, saying, 'Papa, I haf noddings to veer,' and in dat vey get moneys for new. Just tink vat a loss dot would be? And den ven *dey* gets independent, ven any ones gets independent, I does notice dey can haf nothin' said to dem vidout takin' it de wrong way up. Oh, no; no, it vill be a pad day ven de vorkin' girl is in a self-supporting clup. Do you not t'ink so, meedames?"

"Well, professor, I cannot say I agree with you; but what I can say is that you and I will not probably live to see the day when this club is self-supporting. During those days when the club rooms were closed I made nine hundred and eighty-seven calls. I found several families where the mothers promised to give the proceeds of one day's washing a week and others one day's washing in two weeks or a month, always providing I secured them the customer from which this deduction was to be made. But that was the most that any one would pledge. Others pledged five, ten, and twenty-five cents a month, while others said they might be able to give something if they had not to buy ribbons for Miss Denny's balls."

"And joose t'inks, meedames, how much preferables to spend dair moneys for ribbons dan for self-support. Vat saad de young vimmins when you brought dem de report?"

"Well, they seemed disappointed, very much disappointed in fact, for the association to which they hoped to

belong is to be held in the largest, most aristocratic hall in the city, and the young ladies had been there and selected the places on the platform where they hoped to sit."

"Vell, dat is too pads! I lof to see *true* merit rewarded and dose tree fair philanthropists would doubtless haf well filled de retired places they selected."

"Retired—on the front row," I said to myself.

"But den in dis world we will not pe always hafing dose t'ings ve vishes eh, so?"

"Quite true, professor," I replied; "there is a great deal of profound philosophy in that remark."

"Ah, meedames, I am nothin' if not profound. You should read vat de newspapers say of me. Dey says: 'Professor Poggenbeek is acute, penetrating, keen, sagacious, wirile, vigorous, wiwacious, scintillant, animated, wiwid, abysmal in his profundity,' and ve all know how trufful de newspapers vill be. But pardons, meedames, I vill not be meanings to interrupt your story vat vill de young vimmins pe doing now dat dey cannot join de Association."

"They are going to engage a lecturer on Economy and they say they hope at the end of a year the girls will be able then to so manage their affairs as to be self-supporting."

"Why, meedames, it vill pe astonishin' how much wisdom is bound up in de hearts of de tree philanthropists. I vill be admirin' as vell as vondering at dair sagacity. Indeed, I may be sayin' I do almost lof dem all. May I pe gifin' you de trouble to hand dem dis card of mine, vich vill be tellin' dem about my vonderfuls lectures on economy. Dey go ahead of any lectures dat vere ever written on dat subject pefore. And dough my towns-peebls vill pe

vantin' my return so much as never vas yet, as a great favor I vill pe stayin' if de young vimmin vishes."

"Did you receive any new ideas on Christmas and the best way of spending it in connection with an institution of this kind, professor?"

"Ah, meedames, it vill pe truly vonderfuls how much I vill be learning! Oh, dose Christmees gifts of de young vimmins to de adders vas truly grand!" Here the professor's mild blue eyes disappeared entirely out of sight as his emotions rolled them so far in their orbits. "I haf here a full deescription" (producing two foolscap sheets closely written) "und ven ve starts our clup in de Vest I vill pe sending an invitation to dis clup to come und spend a Christmees mit us eh, so!"

It amused me very much in reading over the professor's description to see how deeply impressed he had been with the trimmings, the floral decorations and the "Milk Maid's Ballet." In connection with the latter he said to me:

"Oh, meedames, vat petter proof vill you pe needing of de urgent necessity of de girls' clups dan to see how much dose young vimmins haf learned under Mees Denny's instruction. Oh, if in our clup in de Vest our young vimmins can teach de odders to hop around one-haf as lively, how happy it vill pe making me. Dair is one suggestion I vould offer, and dot is dot de young vimmin mit de light tow hair, from vich de hairpins seem to sleep so easy (he meant Lena Deckenbachschmitt), be requested not to take part ven dair vill pe companies."

I replied I thought that a good suggestion, and did not enter into the particulars that I might have done relative to our being unable to keep the persistent young woman away. If we were able to eject her while the girls were in training she always found out when there was

to be a public affair, and no one knew how she did it, but there she was on the floor smiling, bobbing, slipping down and being very much "distonished," making a grotesque caricature of all the others.

To return to the professor's description. He had a great deal of space devoted to the presents given to each girl, which I must tell the reader might not have been so extensive if the three fair philanthropists had not detected signs of falling off in the attendance after my visits of inquiry. Two evenings there were none at the rooms and the state of the young ladies' feelings can be imagined from what the reader has been previously told. Miss Mettle was the only one who was not afraid of Mary Sharkey. In the emergency, as I could not possibly make all the visits over again before Christmas, Miss Mettle communicated with Mary, and for a consideration she agreed to help me in the arduous work of getting out the girls to receive Christmas gifts.

The reader can readily see how imperative this was, as not only were the newspapers still discoursing of the great benefit of this philanthropic undertaking and the nobility of its originators, but there were to be present at the Christmas celebration influential members of the "Association of Self-Supporting Clubs," and Miss Mettle hoped by making a good impression to induce them to consent to the admittance of her club. The reported number of our members was anywhere from three hundred to five hundred, and to have it happen that not one or only a few of all those girls were present on a given night, was a possibility too ghastly to be quietly endured.

Toward the last I met the young ladies' carriages stopping in front of tenements and they themselves were adding their persuasions to mine to induce the attendance of the offended girls. Enough came out three or four nights

running for Miss Denny to train in the "Milk Maids' Ballet," so that by putting off the celebration till the last of Christmas week a large attendance was secured.

What shall I say of the presents? Perhaps I could not do better than to let the professor discourse of them.

"Oh, meedames," he cried, slapping his knees, "I vill pe almost veepings ven I peheld the first young vimmins receiving her presents. I t'o't she vas valkin off mit de presents of all, de plush box vas so pig she carried! But ven I looked to see somepodys call her back and none vill be doing so, instead anodder young vimmins vill be coming forward and receiving anodder box equally as pig; den, meedames, von tear rolled down each cheek, und I vas so overcome I must use my pocket handkerchief. And so full as dose plush boxes vere of lofly solid silver t'ings—it vill pe escaping my mind joost vat dey could pe used for, meedames; von game, perhaps, eh, so!"

"No, professor, those were toilet articles, including manicure sets and chiropodist tools and silver folding cups to be used in travelling."

"Oh, how glad I vill pe dat I put de question to you, for I should haf inquired for some kind of a silver mounted games. But, meedames, I suppose dair vill pe somepoddy engaged, like de lecturer on 'Economy,' for instance, who vill pe explaining de uses to de young vimmins of de warious t'ings in dair boxes, eh! It vill pe necessary for me to pe present at von or two of dose lectures else I could not explains to de young vimmins in de Nortvest how to use dair boxes, and vat vould pe padt, eh, so!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. GROUT CONDESCENDS TO ATTEND COURT.

AFTER the Christmas holidays the patent case "Islip versus Dearborn," was down on the court calendar to come off, having undergone more than the ordinary amount of postponements and delays. The most of these, as has been intimated in another connection, have been owing to Mr. K. Roundout Grout's excessive reluctance to disturbing his plans for social enjoyment. But his fair mother-in-law, by doling out his allowance for personal expenditure in extremely small quantities, as well as by her threats of breaking up housekeeping and travelling in Europe for a number of years, during which season she pledged herself to make both her husband and son-in-law suffer the extreme rigors of poverty from the small amount she would allow to be appropriated to their use—by these and other influences Mr. Grout was induced to consent to be present at court.

Mr. Wormsley, the lawyer, had taken the precaution to drop his client a note notwithstanding certain notices he had put in the gentleman's looking-glass, saying he should call for Mr. K. Roundout Grout at an hour fully sixty minutes in advance of what was strictly necessary, "In order," as the lawyer said to himself, "to give the pampered son of a cobbler time to extricate himself from the voluminous folds and copious cord and tassels of his pink silk nightshirt without making us late at court."

The lawyer was therefore somewhat surprised when he

arrived at the Islip mansion, to be asked to walk up to Mr. Grout's private apartment without any delay. At first the request brought the fierce scowl that always beautified the lawyer's visage when things went wrong, thinking his client might be going to beg for a little more slumber, but when he was ushered into the room and found Mr. Grout nearly ready, he could not forbear expressing his surprise and pleasure. His client replied, while his lowest, most resonant bass tones trembled with suppressed emotion:

"You see before you a different man, Wormsley, than when you were here last. For some griefs gnaw deep!"

Before Wormsley replied his glance was arrested by the picture of the gentleman's wife and, although he knew what he was about to utter was a ghastly jest he said:

"Yes, I suppose losing one's wife is a grief which gnaws deeper *than* anything else a man is called on to endure."

Mr. Grout threw a quick, searching glance at his lawyer to try and determine in what way it was best to take his remark, but Wormsley was standing before the picture of the deceased, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of her charms. Then the bereaved husband said:

"Certainly it is a great affliction to lose your wife, Wormsley, but I have been called on to undergo other and more recent trials."

"Ah!" remarked the lawyer with a rising accent and somewhat absently; then adding, as if he had been asked his opinion of the picture, "She had a large, well-shaped mouth; she must have had a generous nature."

"Well, by Jove, Wormsley, you'll have to try again, for that is one thing she had not! No, hang it, if she had been generous toward me I should not be living such an abominable, hard life as I am, and as I shall have

to continue doing, even if I win the patent suit. For that will bring me in only a few hundred thousand dollars, for which I must work to hold on to, whereas she might have left me her share of her mother's estate, where I should only have to cut off the coupons and sign my name to an interest in a million or so; but, no, she must go and leave the whole to her miserable little brat."

"A child by a former marriage?" inquired the lawyer.

"No!" roared the client. "Do you suppose I'd stoop to marry a widow? Me? With all——"

"I did not think of the inequalities existing between your own exalted position and that of widowdom. I was only led astray by your term 'brat,' one that is not ordinarily applied by parents to their own, but only for other people's children. To return to my innocent remark, which has called forth so much feeling, please notice I said she *had* a generous nature, which might be true, and yet she might not be generous toward you."

"Confound your impudence, Wormsley!" bellowed the irate client. "How could she have a generous nature and not be generous toward her own husband? Didn't I elevate her and her family to my own social rank in society? How many senators and representatives and justices of the supreme bench could there be invited to this house if I had not been a congressman?"

There came a gentle tap at this juncture and the door opened wide enough to admit Mrs. Islip's fair countenance.

"Excuse me, Son-in-law Grout, for hearing your last few remarks, but really I should have been obliged to take an express train for the western part of New York State to have avoided doing so. As you seem in a mood to ask questions, I can think of a few you might propound with advantage, but which I feared through your excessive

modesty, you might shrink from. The first is 'How elevated was my position previous to my entrance into the Islip family?' and the second, 'How much of a congressman could I have been without my wife's money?' Ha! ha! ha! Mr. Wormsley, to hear Son-in-law Grout talk about elevating this family always amuses me very much. Ha! ha! ha! But though it may be a diversion to listen to your harmless prattle you have something besides prattling to do this morning, remember!" and, Mrs. Islip's sweet smiles leaving her face, she revealed certain lines about her mouth which indicated her imperious will.

On the closing of the door "Son-in-law Grout" was like a man seized with convulsions, his clenched fists were shaken in the direction of the departing figure, his feet flew out as though the desire to kick was there even if the object to be thus dealt with were removed.

"By the blue blazes, man, if I felt like that," rejoined the lawyer contemptuously, "I would at least have a panel out of that door or else kick the whole thing down. I would not kick into space without the satisfaction of even hearing a smash-up."

"Well, but then who would have to pay for it?"

"Why, yourself of course."

"But where would I get the money?" whined the ex-congressman. "It would have to come out of that detestable woman."

"Not necessarily," returned the lawyer. "There are always jobs at street cleaning to be had."

Mr. Grout appeared not to hear this last remark as he continued:

"I used the word *detestable* advisedly, Wormsley; something stronger could be truthfully applied. What would you think of a woman who would give you a sleeping

draught when she knew you had a most important engagement to keep?"

"I should conclude she had objections to my keeping it," returned the lawyer. "Then the question would arise, 'Upon what grounds were her objections founded?'"

"Upon no reasonable grounds, by Jove! She seems to have made up her mind that I shall not get married again."

"Perhaps she does not want to lose the pleasure of your society," returned the lawyer, biting his lip to restrain his sarcastic smile.

"I think that has something to do with it," returned Mr. Grout, pompously, choosing to interpret the remark in a way most flattering to himself. "But at any rate I became engaged very privately to a young lady who has long been expecting me to propose to her and whose mother, until toward the last (possibly because I did not speak sooner), had her whole soul wrapped up in our union. I repeat that I was engaged very privately. I imposed the utmost secrecy on my fair (I believe every man is at liberty to call his fiancée fair, though I have seen more beautiful women) sweetheart. Yet somehow it leaked out. If I knew the scoundrel who told, I would not leave a whole bone in his body. No, sir, I wouldn't!" exclaimed Mr. Grout, his tones growing louder and his fists beginning to shake in every direction. "It's the most infamous piece of work I ever heard of—a man's not being able to marry the woman of his choice!"

"But I don't see why that should prevent your marrying the woman of your choice, because somebody went and told," said the lawyer.

"That is just where the she-devil of it comes in," roared the ex-congressman. "I was not absolutely certain that any one knew, but when I made arrangements to take my

girl out anywhere, something always occurred to prevent. Either her mother would send me off on a wild goose chase, telling me her daughter was in a place where she would not be, or else that woman," pointing in the direction of the door, "found some excuse for preventing my going. And finally when she exhausted her powers of invention in thinking up things, she wanted me to do at such times, she gave me a sleeping draught. It was in my coffee, at a late breakfast, the day of the cloister reception, and I never woke up until eleven o'clock at night."

"Nonsense, man, you probably tippled more than was good for you!" returned the lawyer.

"No such thing, you impudent hound! Tipple! I want to see the man who says I tipple. Don't I know that she gave me the draught? I guess I do. When I accused her didn't she laugh as though she would go into hysterics? It just shows what an unfeeling monster she is."

"Well, I should have thought you could have explained how it happened and made it all right with your lady-love," returned the lawyer.

"Wouldn't you have thought so?" returned K. Round-out Grout, taking out his highly perfumed silk handkerchief and burying his face in its folds while his sobs rent the air.

"Oh; then distress at not being able to *get* a wife, instead of sorrow for the *loss* of one, is the grief that you mentioned as gnawing at your vitals. You should have said so and not tried to mislead me!" said the lawyer with exasperating effrontery.

"Who tried to mislead you, you——"

I think the epithets applied by Mr. Grout to his companion better be trusted to the imagination of the reader to supply, as their appearance on paper could not possibly be for his literary or moral advantage. "It was yourself

who suggested my grieving for my wife, and you know it!"

"Oh, is that so? You must excuse me for getting things mixed a little," returned the lawyer, who, having accomplished his object of diverting his client's mind from his grief, wished now to restore his good humor and hear the *finale* of his *affaire de cœur*.

"You know lawyer's memories are treacherous, there are so many things for them to remember. But I cannot understand how a lady should not condone an offense on the part of her lover that he was so little responsible for as you were for not being on hand the afternoon of the reception. I suppose you told her just how it happened?"

"By Jove, I haven't had a chance to tell her! That little black-eyed imp of a mother of hers has managed it so I could not see her, though I tried two whole days, going to the door nearly every other hour. Then I wrote; but my letters were returned unopened, by the same agency, I suppose. And this morning I received cards for a reception given to announce her engagement to another man."

"Another man!" exclaimed Wormsley in astonishment. "That is remarkable! Who is the other man?"

"Dunraven, the slyest, blackest rogue that——"

"You don't mean his holiness, the revered rector of the 'Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven'?" inquired the lawyer.

"I *do* mean that very self-same green-eyed, yellow-skinned d——. What do you know about him?"

"I am his lawyer as well as yours, and I know enough to understand that by so doing he has applied the torch to that exceedingly combustible and evanescent substance called his popularity."

"Well, that's all right, if only his bony carcass could be

thrown into the midst of the conflagration to perish with the rest."

While this conversation had been in progress Mr. K. Roundout Grout was adding the finer touches to the completion of his toilette. These consisted in applying expensive preparations to his mustache, which, besides being coarse, thick and luxuriant, was inclined to display a variety of not always harmonious colors. He was obliged to exercise great care in this application, for one shade required one mixture, and another shade, another.

In lieu of not having a child who called forth his fatherly instincts, Mr. Grout seemed inclined to lavish a tender, paternal solicitude on his mustache. If there was any time when he was not caressing it or looking down and trying to catch glimpses of it, or regarding its reflection affectionately in the glass, that time was when he was locked in profound slumber. It was too laborious an undertaking for Mr. Grout to attend to his finger-nails so he resorted to the salon of a high professor in the manicurial art when his nails had reached a length that made it an impossibility to put on his gloves, and had attained a discoloration that would do credit to a dyeing establishment dealing only in fast blacks.

But Mr. Grout was not above assisting nature in coloring his lips and underscoring his eyes, and this morning, as his complexion was more of a copperish mahogany than usual, he felt obliged to use a cosmetic for both hands and face. Finally he was ready for his overcoat, and as Wormsley was on hand he did not call the butler or the footman or Mrs. Islip's maid (nor, as in some instances, all three together) to assist in adjusting the silk muffler around his neck and to hold his fur-lined garment. He regretted having made this change, however, for the lawyer nearly dislocated his arm in the endeavor to hasten

matters. As they gained the hall they heard a patter of feet, and young Roundout's voice saying:

"Oh, Mummer Islip, Mummer Islip, s'all Papa Grout g'out? S'an't I keep him from going evwy bit away? S'an't I, s'an't I?" and the two men could hear the child jumping up and down in his excitement, while his grandmother showered upon him caresses and encouraged him with her laughter. I said *two* men heard this; but, strictly speaking, only *one* man could be said to have heard it *all*, for Mr. K. Roundout Grout, knowing his mother-in-law's whimsicalities, did not feel at all certain but she might give his son permission to lay siege to his coat tails, as at a previous time; he therefore was on the street and half a block away before Mr. Wormsley missed him.

When the court room was reached the crier was enjoining silence, the judge and jury were in their places, and the lawyer for plaintiff was ready to address the court. He could not proceed for some moments, owing to the commotion the advent of Hon. K. Roundout Grout caused. The latter had such a lofty carriage that whispers of, "There's the chancellor or some other notable," were to be heard. Several colored orderlies and a sergeant-at-arms hastened to assist him in removing his coat and, after issuing several orders about the position of his seat in a stentorian whisper, Mr. Grout consented to subside.

"Gad, Wormsley, there's that mighty pretty girl I've seen at the club. What is she doing here?" asked Mr. Grout, after a few minutes' silence.

"She's your opponent, Miss Agnes Dearborn."

"You don't mean it? Why didn't you tell me, you sly dog?"

"Tell you!" returned the lawyer. "You've been signing papers for over a year past with her name on them.

I should have thought you might have found it out yourself!"

"You are not such a donkey as to suppose I have read all those papers you've been bringing up for me to sign? No, sir; I have not had time. If you had not indicated by means of a blue pencil where my name was to be written, the chances would have been exceedingly small that you would have had it at all."

"As it has been, you have made your K's and your R's so they might have been mistaken for anything, from a crushed and squirming daddy-long-legs to a tipsy mule driver, and your other letters were correspondingly legible," said Wormsley.

"Confound you for being the most impudent of your tribe!" returned his client, as he readjusted his one large eye-glass to take another look at his fair opponent. He continued his gaze so long that Wormsley said sneeringly:

"She is evidently some one for whom you have been entertaining a secret fancy. I presume if the truth were known your ladylove has discovered your penchant, and it is that which has made her break with you."

"*Me!* Entertaining a fancy for a working girl! That shows how little you know me. It is just the other way; *she* has fancied *me*. But, oh, say, Wormsley, is she the person you have been speaking of as the one to be——"

"Hist, man!" replied the lawyer, frowning darkly.

"But I am whispering. How can any one hear me?"

"The same way you could hear the breathing of a grampus whale half a mile off."

"But, Wormsley," continued the ex-congressman, so much interested in the suggestion he was about to make, that he did not notice the lawyer's remark, "it would not be a bad plan to know her hiding-place, where she might

be reached, eh? You understand me?" and the glance the ex-congressman threw at his lawyer was so full of low cunning and lustful iniquity that his countenance became positively frightful to contemplate.

That is, it would have seemed frightful to a right-minded person. The lawyer, however, being very far removed from a person of that description, appeared highly amused. He could not laugh out loud, because the court was in session; so he buried his face in his newspaper and gave way to his mirth by quiet side shaking.

"That is a good suggestion, eh, Wormsley? I am glad you approve! Capital idea! Oh, I tell you, Wormsley, I was made for a different position in society than that I now hold. I'm just full of wit and fancy and fine ideas; but, gad, man, how's a fellow to do anything with such a mother-in-law?"

"My mirth was not excited wholly by your virtuous suggestion," returned the lawyer, wiping his eyes. "I was also thinking how funny you would look in a striped suit, and I wondered if they would have anything big enough for you; if not, they would be obliged to piece one down, and if it had to be done with different colors, you would look like a crazy-quilt or a crazy zebra!"

"I must say I don't see anything very funny in that," replied Mr. Grout in an injured tone of voice. "Don't you consider yourself smart enough to keep us out of the penitentiary?"

"Yes, but we must be prepared for anything. Sometimes fortune, just as she appears ready to kiss us, slaps us in the face instead."

"But it's your business to see to it she does not slap us!"

Mr. Grout made this last remark in such a loud tone of voice that the judge arose and requested that there be

less conversation carried on in the court room, and events soon occurred which made Mr. Wormsley and his client feel less inclined to laugh and talk than at first they appeared to do.

Mr. Conrad, the lawyer for the Dearborns, had been able to get hold of two persons with whom Mr. Dearborn had talked previous to his sickness, in regard to his patent, both of whom testified that it was not his intention to put the patent in the hands of Mr. Islip, other than for safe keeping during his illness. This was the most damaging testimony which had been brought forward in the trial, and made Mr. Wormsley look very black as he nudged his client, saying:

"I'm afraid you'll not be troubled with the income from the patent."

"What do you mean, Wormsley? What are we paying you for? Why, I *must* have that money. I'll break every bone in your body if you don't get it for me."

"Break away, loggerhead! Can you produce witnesses who will deny what has just been sworn to?" asked Wormsley.

Mr. Grout, having been asleep during the time alluded to, said:

"I thought you could get witnesses to swear to anything you wanted to have them. And if you can't do that, there's the other plan——"

"Well, then, the other plan it must be, and that mighty quick," rejoined the lawyer. He repeated the remark at the close of the session, as he and his client were standing near a window in the court room.

"Why not to-night, Wormsley?" exclaimed Mr. Grout. "You could not have a better time. See, the rain is coming down in torrents. There is a dense fog and nobody would be out who could possibly stay indoors."

"Let me see; I don't know whether the girl goes to her business this evening. She does not go every day." He took out his memorandum and looked through several pages. "Yes, to-night is one of her nights. But now you see there is another consideration. Her father must be taken out of the way by some means at the same time. Now, can you take a carriage and think up a good excuse to tempt him into it, and carry him——"

"But, Wormsley, I want to go to Mrs. De Juncket's ball to-night; you must get some one else."

"We can't do it! Not a person we could trust on so short a notice. It will only be a couple of hours before it must be done. Moreover, if we could get any one, we should have to pay him an enormous sum, and Mrs. Islip is getting—well, you know how she is getting—and it will be a pretty sum we shall have to pay to the one who takes off the girl."

"But they are going to have a new kind of souvenir at the De Juncket ball and I want to go."

"Oh, well, go then, and let your income from the patent slide. I guess you would find it too laborious to hang on to it, anyway!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"No, sir, I must have that income. My life now is intolerable. I must have some kind of an income, so I need not call on that woman for quite so much. An extra coaching party once in a while, or a trip to California, occasionally, I would not mind depending on her for, but——"

"Well, then, I'm to understand that you will take charge of the old gentleman, eh, Grout? And mind you do it as it ought to be done." And the lawyer and his client stood and talked some time over the best way to accomplish their deed of darkness.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DEED OF DARKNESS.

"OH, what a dark, stormy night it is going to be!" I— Louise Marchmont Winn—made this exclamation to myself, standing by a window in the club room, the same evening as that referred to in the last chapter. "And poor, dear Agnes has to be out in it all," I continued. "If I did not have that fancy work on hand for the bazaar, I would close the club in time to go down to her place of business and accompany her home!"

And if I could have seen the lawyer and his client standing by the court room window at that same time plotting my darling's ruin nothing would have kept me from carrying out my purpose. But if I had been on hand I might have been kept from rendering her as effective aid as through God's own wise ordering I was enabled. As it was, I gave myself up to the charms of revery.

Given comfort and warmth within, and storm and tempest without, how the mind loves to wander over events past, present and future! My thoughts first travelled out west. My nephew had written me more distracting and incomprehensible letters than ever lately. He had brought forward so many reasons why my plans for his coming east should not be carried out that I felt sure he was thinking seriously of making the trip; but from the nature of the poetry he quoted and from the sage philosophizing to which he gave utterance, I could not for the life of me tell whether it was to be his wedding journey, his ante-nuptial tour or an excursion to collect all the

facts possible to prove that a life of celibacy was the only proper life for man.

He must be prospering, or he could not have sent me the handsome sum for a Christmas gift that he did. It enabled me to give my darling Agnes a surprise, get a pretty, warm dressing gown for her father, and still have something left. I don't know how I could have got along without it, for my salary was behind, as usual. In fact, the financial condition of the club was a subject which made us all tremble. Before Christmas, by dint of upbraidings, pleading, apostrophizings, threatenings, blarneyings, vituperations and intimidations of various kinds, enough money was gathered together to remove all fear of actual arrest; but only the day previous I had been obliged to hold a very disagreeable interview with the man who furnished the Christmas gifts so graphically described by Professor Poggenbeek. The cost of the presents was sixteen hundred and seventy-three dollars and thirty-five cents and cheap at that; for there had been over two hundred of them. The man was a Hebrew of a pronounced type, and tears fell from his eyes like rain as he told me of his difficulties in trying to find out who owed him. He had been to every one whose name he could get hold of, and each had sent him to some one else.

"And I can't find nones dat owes me all dat large moneys. What shall I does! What shall I does!"

"To whom were you asked to charge and send the boxes?" I inquired.

"To de 'Girls' Club, corner of Fifth avenue and —— Street;" and I said to myself, of course if dey can lib on Fifth avenue dey vill be paying all vat dey owes."

"Well, they *will* pay you some time, my friend; do not be so despondent."

“But I cannot carrys such large accounts, Mees; my capital is small, and Jacob, my son, is joost married, and mine vifes is sick and——”

I comforted the man as much as I could, and told him to go as often as possible to Miss Mettle’s and Miss Denny’s homes, and eventually he would receive redress. He had spent most of his time since then between the two places, I had learned from Mary Hogan, the woman who cleaned.

This action on his part had roused the managers to renewed activities in connection with instituting a grand bazaar. Each one pledged herself to supply a certain number of articles, which were to be offered for sale. These articles were to be sofa cushions, tidies, pincushions, mats, scarfs, doilies, table napkins, embroidered lay-overs, and various other household necessities and ornaments.

There had been a great sale of stamped goods of this description, and all of the managers had been down and purchased. On their way back they had sent up their purchases to me. Some of these packages had little notes pinned on them, which ran as follows:

“DEAR MRS. WINN: Thinking you might like something to occupy an occasional spare minute I send the enclosed dozen of doilies and two dozen table napkins and half dozen sideboard scarfs to be embroidered for our bazaar.”

I do not think one of the managers failed to have solicitude for my spare minutes, till the pile of bundles containing articles to be embroidered reached a goodly height. All day I had been taking these bundles in, and late in the afternoon Miss Annie Hopper came to deliver her quota in person.

"I know you do not have very much to do, Mrs. Winn, and as *my* time is so full I concluded to allow you to do some embroidering for me for the bazaar. It will have to be done so nicely that I thought I would come around and tell you about it."

"You are too late, Miss Hopper; look at that pile! More than I can *possibly* do now."

She went over to where the bundles lay and picked one of them up and read, "Leonora Bullwinkle!"

"Did you ever hear such impudence? That girl never would have known enough to have done this if she had not heard me say I was going to, and here she has whipped down town and got her bundle here first. Well, you need not touch her things."

Several others she picked up and sneered at in the same way; then she opened her own package.

"Miss Hopper, you will have to excuse me," I replied firmly; "the work is too fine and elaborate that you want done. I cannot do it."

Although she had said they were for the bazaar somehow it flashed over me that she was going to be married and these were for her house furnishings.

"How do you *dare* to tell me that you cannot do this for me? I say you *can* and you *shall*. If you do not you will have cause to regret it to the last day of your life. I will see that you lose your present position, and I will make it so hard for you to get another you will perish of starvation."

"I might as well perish in that way as to make myself blind in the way you suggest."

We had a good many more words over the matter, but I would not yield, and she left in a passion.

The wind as it wailed and roared down the chimney reminded me of her voice. I could think of nobody I

had ever met in my life who had made themselves as disagreeable to me.

"I wonder whom she is to marry," I said to myself. "Whoever it may be, he has my heartfelt sympathy."

Then the envelope with her name written in a handwriting resembling my nephew's appeared before my mental vision. I shuddered as I thought what unhappiness might be in store for me, and prayed with all the fervor of my nature that God would spare me the trial of seeing my nephew unhappily married. When on this subject, my thoughts grew so burdensome that I was glad to interrupt them by getting up to prepare my simple evening meal. This had been done and cleared away, when a few of the girls strayed in. The young lady who was to take charge this evening not arriving, the girls wanted to help me in work for the bazaar. I had cause to regret my yielding to their entreaties, for most of what they did had to be taken out and done over again.

Finally, the girls had all gone home, and I took up the crash used in stormy weather, besides rolling up the rugs, as I was expected to do every night. Over the plush easy-chairs I drew linen covers and did up some of the bric-à-brac in the tissue paper and paper boxes in which it was sent to the club. There was holland to put over the window hangings; but that was not always in its place, as I had to get on a stepladder to do this and often I was too tired. The six or eight vases of flowers, however, I never felt like neglecting. I took them to the bath-room, gave them their nightly shower-bath and changed the water, placing them in the coolest corner of the rooms. I finished all these preparations for the night and, standing before the group of statuary embodying "Lincoln Emancipating the Slave," I asked in a cheerful tone of voice, "Well, Abraham, my dear, do you

want your night-cap on?" for that is what drawing on the cover for the group always reminded me of. Abraham appeared to be more sleepy and desirous of his nightly head-covering than usual, or else I saw reflected my own state of mind, and I had the cover half on, when I heard what sounded like knocking at the outer door.

"It might be that," I said, as I leisurely finished Abraham's night toilet, "or it might be that the storm has managed to get hold of some unfastened sign and is beating it against the side of the house." I went to the window.

The street lamps looked dim and weird through the driving rain, each one of them surrounded by a dull halo. The buildings loomed up dark and imposing, and made one think of giants opposing force against giants.

Oh, what a night for my darling to be out in! How glad I felt that there was such a good prospect that the necessity of her doing so was soon to cease. To-morrow or the next day (I should probably receive a note by the morning's mail to tell me which) I should be needed in the court room myself.

But again I heard the same sounds as before, this time so much more forcibly, that I could not mistake their source. Somebody was beating with a cane on the outer door. I could not explain it, but my hands trembled as I turned the keys in the locks of the intervening doors. My heart was filled with undefined terror. It was not caused by fear of who should be at the door at that time, for it was not late, and often the girls returned for something left, but I seemed possessed of premonitions of an impending calamity. My teeth were chattering and a cold perspiration stood on my forehead by the time I had the outer door opened.

Kipp Grassey only stopped beating the door with his

cane when he heard my hand on the knob. He stood there with no hat on, his straight, straw-colored hair tossed wildly about by the wind.

"My God! Have mercy on us all!" he exclaimed. "She is gone!"

"Whom do you mean?" I asked fiercely.

"Whom *could* I mean?" he replied with equal heat. "You know there is only one person in the world for me!"

"Oh, Agnes, Agnes!" I sobbed piteously, "why did I not go down for you this evening as my heart dictated?"

"It would not have done the least particle of good. The devils were prepared for some one to be with her, I could see from extra ones lurking round, and if I had not had my man James with me they would have finished me. But what are you doing?" he asked in astonishment, as he saw me putting on my waterproof and rubbers.

"I am going down with you to look over the place where you last saw her."

Mr. Grassey tried to dissuade me, because of the great violence of the storm, telling me that he had left James on the ground and he should go right back to see if anything had happened; but I was not to be turned from my purpose. As we came out upon the sidewalk the wind swooped down upon us as if it were a bird of prey and we its lawful prize; however, we managed to resist its attacks and proceed slowly down the street. Where two avenues meet, and near an Elevated station we crossed to the western side of the space (for a small triangular piece of ground devoted to flowers and foliage plants in summer marks the change in direction of the avenues at this point).

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Grassey, "do you see that door

where it says 'To Let'? that is the door through which the one-eyed hag allured her victim."

In a kind of blind frenzy I stepped up to the door and began ringing the bell and beating with Mr. Grassey's cane.

A policeman came out quickly from some place round the corner, and said roughly:

"What's the matter with you? Don't you see that sign? That is an empty house. What do you expect to get from raising such a row there?"

"That house may be empty of furniture," Mr. Grassey replied, while the wind made his usually glass-smooth hair look like a disturbed straw bundle, "but it was not empty of human beings less than thirty minutes ago, for I saw some people going in."

"Oh, yes, you undoubtedly saw wonderful things," returned the policeman derisively. "Young men of your style are apt to after big wine dinners."

Mr. Grassey took his cane from me and was on the point of making a dash at the policeman with it when I recalled him by saying:

"We have not time to stop. Let us find James and see if he has been able to gain any information which will throw any light on the subject."

"You are right," cried Mr. Grassey, and we left the policeman and walked down the avenue.

"Where can James have gone?" I asked, as we looked up and down.

"I am sure I cannot think," replied Mr. Grassey. "I told him not to leave the block, but to walk up and down before that door as nearly as he could."

We were at the corner of the street nearest the door and nearest the Elevated station. Something attracted my attention, lying like a long bundle in the shadow of

one of the porches on a side street. I said shudderingly:

"Come, let us see what that is."

We approached and found it to be James. He was unconscious and blood was flowing from a wound on his head.

I stood over him while Mr. Grassey went to a hotel and brought a physician and men to remove him to a private room in the hotel. We sent the men away as soon as we perceived that James was coming to himself, and we learned that he had found out from a street urchin that that house into which Agnes had been entrapped had an entrance on the side street near where we found James lying. He had seen some one brought out of this entrance, seemingly on a stretcher, and an ambulance in waiting. Hearing a muffled cry coming from this stretcher, as though a gag were getting loosened from some one's mouth, he made a dash to get hold of it. He had time to drag the quilt off and see Agnes lying there bound hand and foot. She looked in his face and managed to cry: "My father! Save my father!" when all consciousness departed.

"That devil of a policeman probably gave you your laying out," exclaimed Mr. Grassey, grinding his teeth.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AFTER THE KIDNAPPERS AND IN THE COURT ROOM.

JAMES insisted on our leaving him, and worked himself up into such a state of feverish excitement, when we hesitated about the absolute necessity of going around immediately to Agnes's lodgings to see what was being done to her father, that Mr. Grassey and I were imbued with his ardor. James would not be satisfied if one of us went.

"Na, na, maister. 'Twill gin the villains mair trouble to lay two o' yez out 'n one."

The storm was still raging when we left the hotel and the wind took Mr. Grassey's hat (which was James's and slightly large) and gave him a chase of a block and a half after it. The hour was nearing twelve and Mr. Grassey and I approached the Dearborn lodgings with fear and dread. We found a carriage in waiting and the lower door unlatched, while some dark substance like a piece of coal kept it from closing quite together.

As we came up the stairs we heard voices and saw a light coming out of the door leading into the Dearborns' room.

"I refuse to go with you, sir," Mr. Dearborn was saying in his trembling voice, "and I charge you if you know why my daughter is so late in coming home, and if you do not want an old man's curse, to tell me."

"Oh, now, look-a-here, old fellow, don't curse me, for I really don't know anything about it," replied a voice,

which we perceived, as we arrived on the scene, to come from a man dressed in full evening suit with a vest of yellow satin, denoting his calling of butler. Seeing us he continued:

"I will leave it to these people to decide if you are not rather hard on me in not accepting my kind invitation."

Mr. Dearborn answered the look of inquiry he saw on our faces by saying, after cordially greeting me:

"This fellow has spent over half an hour trying to persuade me to go with him for 'a pleasant drive,' 'a quiet but enjoyable little excursion,' 'a fine outing,' 'an extended tour,' 'an exhilarating jaunt,' but he has not been able to give me any definite idea where we were going."

While Mr. Dearborn was talking, this individual strutted airily up and down, with his hands in his pockets, humming to himself as though thoroughly at peace with all mankind. "Oh, well, I want to surprise you, that's all, by taking you to the nicest, cosiest, most desirable——"

He was interrupted by a sharp poke from Mr. Grassey's cane, while that irate individual asked:

"And do you think such surprises are allowable, you double-dyed villain?"

"I am nothing of the kind, I do assure you. I am nothing but an honest butler, proposing to earn an honest penny by doing for my mistress's son-in-law something he was unable to do for himself, being as how this was the evening of the De Juncket's ball, where he wished to be at the same time that he wished to convey this good gentleman to —— but I must not tell where—ha! ha! ha! Don't you wish you knew?" laughing airily and waving both hands, around which lace ruffles fluttered in graceful sweep.

"And who may your mistress and her son-in-law be?" I asked.

"Madam, I beg you will not think me uncivil. I would like very much to tell you, but that was something I was particularly requested not to reveal. I was told if everything else was successful, and I told the names of those with whom I was connected, I should not receive that which will enable me to marry and be the happiest man in the world."

"I don't believe a word he says," cried Mr. Grassey, rushing at him with his cane—whack—whack—"be the unhappiest man in the world for your lying roguery!"

"Oh jingo! oh my buttons! but I am, I am; but don't tear my lace ruffles."

"I'll make lace ruffles of *you*, if you don't get out of here!" replied Mr. Grassey, continuing his beating. "Why don't you go?" he asked.

"If you'd only be afther givin' a poor chap the width of a three-inch board, so as how he might squeeze a past you, I'd show you how I could go!" replied the butler, jumping up and down and dodging this way and that to escape Mr. Grassey's cane.

Finally he succeeded, but that was not effected until every one in the house was roused, and in the hall, to see what could be the matter. Most of them, annoyed by the disturbance, were glad to have a chance to vent their displeasure on the disturber, and we could hear this one giving him a poke and that one a slap, while he assured them he was an honest man, only anxious to accumulate a little money against his wedding day and also very desirous of preserving his ruffles, which cost a great deal of labor, besides the actual coin they represented.

Mr. Dearborn was overcome with grief when we told him all we knew of Agnes. I could only rouse him by

urging upon him the importance of our putting forth every energy to trace her to her hiding place.

"Oh, but my dear Mrs. Winn," exclaimed the bereaved man, "it takes money for such things, and we have lived up to the last cent of our income. What can I do?"

Mr. Grassey looked at me and nudged me, intimating thereby his desire to have me express to Mr. Dearborn, for him, his willingness to undertake the search at his own expense; but I thought such assurances would better come from the man himself, and I pretended not to see what was wanted. Mr. Grassey therefore cleared his throat several times, ran his hand through his hair, and said tremblingly:

"Oh, say now, if money is what is wanted, I have enough. And I'll feel honored if you'll let me use it in such a—a—a—cause. Won't I, Mrs. Winn?"

I could not help seconding Mr. Grassey's offer, though I inwardly rebelled at Agnes and her father being so much indebted to him. There was no other way, however, and after receiving Mr. Dearborn's tearful blessing, the current of our thoughts was immediately turned into devising the best means of securing Mr. Dearborn from further molestation. Of the various plans which presented themselves we finally decided that Mr. Grassey's was the most feasible; which was, to have a carriage and take Mr. Dearborn and James both to the bachelor apartments occupied by Mr. Grassey, where the one could nurse, care for and protect the other. By the time this was done (for we took the two men separately and then we stopped and talked over the best detectives to engage), it was after five o'clock. Mr. Grassey would not have a Pinkerton man nor would he have anything to do with the New York police.

"They compose too much the leisure class of our com-

munity, Mrs. Winn," he said. "If we were going to entertain some foreigner by a parade we'd have them out in full force, as they afford a good example of what a robust animal a man may become in this climate, under the most favorable circumstances of 'quiet leisure and serene contemplation of the heavens.'"

"Yes, Mr. Grassey," I replied, "I agree with you, their services are limited; but you must not omit from the list of their qualifications their ability to offer the most impudence, in the shortest time and for the least provocation, of any known agency."

We were talking thus on our way to a friend of James, who had served in the capacity of private detective all his life, as had his father and grandfather before him.

We were fortunate in finding the man in, and without much delay we were driving as fast as we could to the scene of the abduction. The same policeman was at his post who spoke so insultingly to Mr. Grassey the previous night, and he scowled and muttered under his breath things that we had reason to believe were far from complimentary. He also endeavored, when our backs were turned, to intimidate and prevent any person we addressed giving us the information we asked for. But in spite of his malign influence, Mr. Bundy, our detective, found out enough to send us with all possible speed out on the Bloomingdale road, then on to St. Nicholas avenue, through Harlem, Tuckahoe and Riverdale. Mr. Bundy sat on the box with the driver, while Mr. Grassey and I were inside the carriage. We had been through so much fatigue, and Mr. Bundy inspired us with so much confidence, that we gave ourselves up to the soporific influence of the motion of the vehicle, and slept until roused at noon by our companion. He was in high spirits, as he felt sure we were on the right trail.

"The hotel man's wife told me, at the last stop we made," said Mr. Bundy, "that when no one was looking she went out to examine the queer conveyance a party had who passed there three hours before, and in it she discovered some one rolled carefully up, and either asleep or dead. She had not time to discover which it was when the one-eyed hag in attendance came out and said by way of explanation that the person was sick and they were carrying her to a hospital. The hotel man's wife expressed surprise that so many hospitals had been passed, when the hag grew abusive and drove on."

"God grant she may not be dead before we reach her!" I exclaimed fervently.

"Amen!" cried Mr. Grassey.

Of a sudden it came over me that nothing had been done about giving Mr. Conrad, at the court room, particulars of Agnes's abduction, or even where her father was to be found. I had just finished a comfortable meal, which a farmer's wife had been kind enough to provide, when this conviction seized me.

"Oh, well, we will go to the nearest telegraph station and send word," said Mr. Grassey.

On inquiry we found that we must either return to Yonkers or travel ten miles further to accomplish this. But there was a flag station whence a return train might be taken to the city in fifteen minutes.

We discussed anxiously whether it would be better for me to go on with the detective party, or return to look after the interests of Agnes and her father. Mr. Grassey thought if it were nothing but money which was at stake I had no need to be so anxious; but Mr. Bundy felt that the party we were after were nearly within our grasp, and my presence was not so indispensable there but that I could be spared to return, and further, that money was

not a matter to be despised. Accordingly, in a very short time after the matter had come up to be discussed, I found myself on the cars waving an adieu to the detective and Mr. Grassey, the latter wearing a very downcast countenance. On the train I bought several papers. They were morning and afternoon editions and contained notices of the affair in which I felt such a consuming interest. The heading in one was "The Freak of a Pretty Woman," and Agnes's disappearance was represented as the capricious act of a pretty woman thirsting for notoriety. Another one represented her as a young and beautiful adventuress, who had been instituting lengthy litigation against two of New York's eminently honest citizens, but who, when she perceived these measures were not likely to succeed, had concluded that flight was her best safeguard.

"The same villain planned these notices who undertook Agnes's abduction," I said to myself, and the blackness of the crime made me grind my teeth and long to have the perpetrator brought to justice. In spite of all my efforts, it was three o'clock when I reached the court room. I gave my card to the orderly and asked that it be taken to Mr. Conrad immediately. He shook his head and said:

"Impossible just now; there is a matter exciting the court and no interruptions will be allowed."

I was allowed to stand where I could hear what was going on, and I discovered that the excitement was caused by the question whether the case should go before the jury immediately, with the prejudicial influence of the mysterious disappearance of both father and daughter to guide their decision to a certainly adverse issue, or whether it should wait over until something could be heard of the fugitives. I made two more efforts to get the orderly to

take something to Mr. Conrad for me, but all in vain. I was standing out in the corridor, wringing my hands in my agitation, when a bright-faced newsboy came up, and after offering me his papers, he said:

"Any er'nt you'd like to have me run, mum?"

I looked at him sharply and my despair urged me to reply:

"Boy, can you run fast, and dodge?"

"Bet your life I can, n'you'll hold my papers!" And the boy was all ready in a minute.

The next time the door opened the orderly in charge felt something shoot through his legs like a cannon ball. By the time he had turned around to see what it could be my messenger was half way up to the judge's bench. Another orderly tried to head the boy off, but by a skillful dodge the orderly was sent head foremost on an empty bench, which turned over with a crash. I, standing without, was amazed at the uproar that ensued. The judge issued orders, the lawyers accused each other of underhanded dealings, and my boy, who had been captured, added spice to the whole by calling out:

"Ouch, ouch, you hurt! Let go! Where's Conrad? Oh, Conrad!" Then when I heard him ask, "Be you Conrad for sartin?" my heart leaped for joy.

I had to borrow the money to pay the boy, for I wanted him well paid. I gave him fifteen dollars, and as soon as that was done I was put on the witness stand. My testimony made a profound impression, and the jury did not go on duty that night.

"The case is ours and will be finished in two or three days!" exclaimed Mr. Conrad. "Now we must be careful to secure the good will of the Californian firm who have worked the patent successfully in past years. They have just made a change in their agent to attend and watch

the case. I understand the new man will arrive to-morrow. Please name an hour when I can come to your rooms with him. There are a few preliminary matters we might discuss before we meet with Mr. Dearborn, though if your detective has been successful in his search for the daughter her presence would be desirable."

The following day at five at the club rooms was the time and place fixed upon when there would be the least liability of interruption, either from the young ladies or the girls.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN INOPPORTUNE EXPLOSION OF TEMPER.

THERE were several telegrams waiting my return from the court room. One was from the detective, Mr. Bundy, saying that they were still on the right track and thought it would not be long before their game would be bagged. Two others were from Mr. Grassey. In the first he asked me to telegraph when I could join them, and gave the name of the station they expected to reach by the time I could answer. Arriving at the station and not finding my telegram waiting he sent another, asking why I had not let him hear from me, and telling me that they had reason to believe their enemy had doubled on their tracks and I would better not try to join them till the morrow; but he named a station to which he wanted me to telegraph. I was hastening out to send this word when I met Miss Hopper.

"I have been here twice before to-day, and found you out both times, Mrs. Winn," she said, drawing herself up haughtily, while her protruding blue eyes flashed forth her displeasure. I told her if she would wait until my return from the telegraph station I would explain my absence. She was there when I returned, but I could see she was in the state of Vesuvius previous to an eruption.

I began to rehearse the story of Agnes's abduction, when she interrupted me with:

"Oh, yes, I have read all about that affair in the papers.

You are very unwise to allow yourself to be mixed up in it, to say nothing of your remissness in leaving your post here, with all the work that has got to be done before the bazaar opens. I have hitherto considered you a woman of too much conscience to be so neglectful."

Miss Leonora Bullwinkle, who had heard the conversation from the hall, broke in at this point, with her thick, spluttering utterance:

"Yeth, and thereth my bundle I sthent dayth and dayth ago not even opened!"

"Young ladies," I replied, my voice scarce above a whisper on account of my extreme fatigue, "I am too much used up to talk the matter over with you now. But I must say, it seems hardly the right time to talk about neglect of duty when a precious human life is at stake, and you feel you can in any way be the means of saving it, especially when that life is as dear as the young lady's in question is to me." Here I burst into tears.

"Oh, well," replied Miss Hopper, "all this distress comes to you because you have allowed your affections to be centered on an unworthy object. If you had confined your attention, as you should have done, to the duties of your position you would have been spared all this. But we will have to call a managers' meeting to decide what the exigencies of the case require."

So saying she and Miss Bullwinkle withdrew.

I had only time to compose myself and get a light supper when the girls of the club began to arrive. The first one to open the door was Mary Sharkey.

"Ah, dear Mrs. Winn, it bees turrible about that sweet young lady, ain't it?" and seeing my swollen eyes and noticing my quivering lips her own eyes moistened with sympathetic tears. "Can't I do nothing to help yez?" she asked.

I thanked her, but told her all was being done that could be thought of, for the present.

"I started early so as to get here first before any of the others," she continued. "I had something to tell, but I'm afreerd yez'll not be wantin' to hear it?"

"I shall always be glad to hear of anything good that happens to any of the dear girls whom I have met in connection with this club," I answered.

"Why, Mrs. Winn, are yez going to leave?" she asked.

"I hardly know what my plans will be now, Mary. They are very unsettled."

"If *you* are going, then I sha'n't mind lavin' *myself*," replied the girl. "But the fact of it is, Mike and me's decided to be j'ined, and he made me promise, after our weddin' day I'd never go to no more clubs. He's a raal queer fellow, that Mike is! And he says his experience hast taught him to be mighty shy of all girls who call themselves club girls. He says he don't nowise think I have received much injury as yet, because as far as he could find out *this* club hadn't gone fur to teeche much of anything; leastways, not enough evenings running to amount to anything. But he thinks he is plucking me like a brand from the burning, and if I wuz let, there's no knowing how much harm 'ud come to me. He says he never expects to be rich enough to cook the dishes you learns how to cook at clubs, and as fur dress makin' and millinery, what good is it to learn them things, if at the same time you gain a taste for makin' more dresses and bunnits than your husband can afford?"

"There's a great deal of truth in Mike's reasoning," I answered, "and I hope, Mary, you will try and make him a good wife."

Further private conversation was impossible, as the girls came in in large numbers. Most of them had seen

in the papers the accounts of Agnes's disappearance, and not one showed the slightest inclination to believe the prejudicial reports. Several came up to me and said:

"Mrs. Winn, some one told us the papers said as how it wuz a bold, bad huzzy as wuz taken off; but we know'd better. We know'd she wuz a sweet, pleasant-mannered person, for hadn't we seen her? and there's no use telling us."

When Biddy O'Monahan and Maggie Flynn entered I saw at a glance that some disaster had overtaken their families. I took them into my room in order to hear their story and see if I could offer any consolation.

"Och, sure, dear Mrs. Winn, it's turrible bad times as has got us now. Both our muthers had warnings to lave just before we came away from home this avening," said Biddy, while Maggie was too much overcome by her tears to say anything.

"What!" I said, "have you not paid your rent?"

"No, not fur the past two months," replied Biddy, hanging her head.

"Has there been sickness in either of your families?" I asked.

"No, mum," replied Biddy.

"Have any of you been out of work?" I further interrogated.

"No, mum," said Biddy.

"Well, then, what has been the trouble? You seemed to be in very comfortable circumstances when I first visited you," and I wore a very stern countenance.

"Faith, thin, I am afther thinking it's along of the yaller satin gown. You knows the fust time I wore that dress it were a turrible stormy evening, and it got a little m'yist (moist). I shouldn't have minded that, if one of the young ladies had not been afther sayin' as

how it weren't bright-colored enough; so then I says to muther, 'I guess I'll have the dress dyed.' She objected at fust, but whin she see I was dead set she lave off wid her objections, and I tuk the dress to a dye house. Me and Maggie wint afther it whin the toime wuz up fur it to be done. It didn't suit me."

"How could it," exclaimed Maggie, tittering, "all laong of being such a dirty, nasty color! I told Biddy at the shop niver to pay fur the loikes of that, but she wouldn't mind."

"Yis, I knows; but thin I wuz a-thinkin' Maggie wuz jealous-like, so I wudn't noways be afther humoring her, and I wint straight to a shop and bought some splendid velveteen to trim it wid. Afther we got home we found, besides streaks on the front, there wuz that horrid tear right where no trimming could be put on to hide it, and I bust into tears and cried all night and all the next day. Thin me muther, along of her fright of me losing me eyesight, sid she'd buy the dress uf me to make up fur me younger sister. She did, and I tuk what she give, wid three months' wage besides, and bought me a 'rattler' fur Miss Dinny's last ball."

"And how cud I see Biddy all dressed out to kill, and me wid an old gownd on?" querulously asked Maggie.

"Well, girls," I said sternly, "is it worth being turned out of your home for all this?"

"No—o—o—o!" exclaimed both at once, while Maggie's tears flowed afresh.

"You think you would prefer a roof to shelter you rather than having silks and velvet, to walk the streets unprotected?" I asked.

"Yes—s—s—s—s," they said.

"Well, then, I tell you what can be done. Both of you take your finery and raise what you can on it at a pawn-

shop, and then come to me and I will make up the remainder, and with a clean record you can start afresh. Perhaps you will have learned a lesson from this experience that may be of benefit."

I spent a restless, disturbed night. I was going through with my experience of the previous night and day. Again and again I heard Mr. Grassey's knockings and felt the sickening sensations that his news of Agnes's cruel seizure caused me. If I fell into a troubled slumber it was to be rudely awakened by imagining myself falling out of the carriage that Mr. Grassey and the detective and myself were in for so many hours.

The morning dawned and found me unrefreshed. I was feverishly longing for news from Mr. Grassey, and I did not have to wait long. The first telegram told of losing the trail and having to retrace their steps to where they knew with certainty the absconding party had been seen. The next telegram filled me with an undefined dread, from the evident desire to conceal something which had been found out.

I think I must have gone crazy if I had not been obliged to fill my time full with making preparations to leave immediately after the meeting with Mr. Conrad and the Californian agent. I was obliged in consequence to find some one to take my place at the club. I supposed the managers' meeting, that Miss Hopper spoke about calling, would be held about two o'clock, and I made it convenient to be absent in order to give them the free and undisturbed use of the rooms. My presence, I realized, would only be an embarrassment. There were calls to be made on sick club members and these, together with some small purchases, filled the time until half-past four. I ardently hoped that the rooms would be empty on my return, but I realized when I reached the

foot of the stairs, from the commotion issuing through the closed doors, that such was not the case. In fact, I was puzzled at the noise. Not but that I had previous managers' meetings to judge by, which, I reflected, had always been stormy affairs, but this went ahead of anything I ever heard before in the *diversity* of sounds, as well as their intensity. I stopped a few minutes without, but not wishing to be discovered in a position where I might be called an eavesdropper, and also feeling anxious that the room be cleared as soon as possible, I decided to enter.

I found part of the noise the result of Miss Leonora Bullwinkle's efforts to induce the man of Hebraic extraction to throw off a third of the sum charged for the Christmas gifts.

"Well, sthir, I have the money right here in my hand, and if you'll sthign that rectheip you sthall have it at oncth," she was saying.

The man protested, with tears and groans and sighs, that he could not allow this; if he did, his son Yacob would be defrauded, his father and his grandfather be dishonored, and his great-grandfather would rise from his grave and point the finger of shame at him.

The florist also was present, endeavoring to make arrangements with Miss Mettle for a *weekly* settlement of *his* dues, which were over a month behindhand in payment. He had a task which required great tact and skill in performing, for the order was a desirable one, as under ordinary circumstances he was enabled to dispose to advantage of flowers that were a trifle old and that otherwise would have to be thrown out. He did not want the order withdrawn, neither did he wish to supply it without a reasonable assurance of its being paid.

After arguing some time and coming to no decision, Miss Mettle sent him to her mother.

Miss Bullwinkle exhausted her patience and her powers of oratory on the Jewish silversmith in trying to beat him down to her figure, but failing utterly both in that and in having him leave with the bill unsettled, she pulled out the entire sum and sent him off rejoicing. Then the hum of voices of those managers who were not interested either in the silversmith or the florist but were gathered around the pile of bundles sent to accommodate me with "pleasant occupation" for a spare moment, increased in sound and emphasis. There seemed a variety of opinions on the subject, though each one was sure none of the others would have thought of sending her bundle if the suggestion had not been borrowed from a superior source. And now those bundles were there, what should be done with them?

Miss Rounds remarked:

"I don't see what good there will be in leaving those bundles here. There are too many for Mrs. Winn to work them all. We would better take them home, and either work the designs ourselves, or else get some one else."

Miss Hopper and Miss Bullwinkle replied, No, indeed, they should do no such thing with *their* bundles, anyway. They had sent the materials more as an accommodation or as a privilege, in order to furnish both Mrs. Winn and the club girls the means of showing a little gratitude, to say nothing of the inestimable advantage they might derive from learning to embroider all kinds of fancy-work.

And some one remarked in support of this view that it certainly would be well for the girls to learn *something*, for as far as she could find out they had not accomplished anything in that direction up to date.

This infamous slander on their herculean efforts the three fair philanthropists proceeded to repudiate all together, and with such warmth that the offerer of the remark left the room in tears.

After this episode Miss Rounds remarked:

"Well, if none of the rest of you are going to take your work away to be done elsewhere I sha'n't take mine. It has to be finished in four weeks and two days, as we have seen by consulting the calendar. Now supposing we consult Mrs. Winn and see if she thinks it possible to finish it by that time?"

I could see that Miss Hopper tried her best to stop this move, as if she wished to insinuate that a salaried person was not to be consulted, but simply bidden.

"Young ladies," I replied, after listening to an explanation of what was required in regard to the embroidery, "it will be impossible for me to undertake the work which you propose."

Miss Hopper asked ironically:

"Perhaps it would be well for us to ask Mrs. Winn what work it *would* be possible for her to undertake. She seems to find it possible to absent herself from her post here most of the time."

This attack stirred me deeply, especially as I detected a movement in the hall which assured me that Mr. Conrad was standing outside, and it was a deep mortification to think he was hearing me addressed in such a heartless manner. The Californian agent was doubtless there, too, but I did not care so much for a stranger.

"Yesterday, Miss Hopper," I replied indignantly, "was the first day I have ever been away from these rooms, except when calling in the interest of the club, since my connection with the place. And yesterday I was working in the interest of one of your own club members."

"Were you engaged to work in the interest of our club members or for us?" asked Miss Hopper bitingly.

There were a good many replies which sprang to my mind and which might be made to this sarcastic question of Miss Hopper's, but I remained silent, and she continued:

"You were engaged to work for us. By your silence you acknowledge the same, and when we decide that our interests will be served best by your embroidering for us, why then you are to embroider without a word."

"Even whether I know how to embroider or not?" I asked.

"You can easily learn. A person who has given herself all the superior airs and graces that *you* have since you have been with us ought not to find it difficult to acquire any art. Ha! ha! ha!"

Miss Hopper laughed a hard, disagreeable laugh, while the gentlemen outside the door moved uneasily, as if impatient at being made witnesses of the unpleasant scene.

"Young ladies," I said, longing to terminate the interview at the earliest possible moment, "there is no use in our wasting further words in this matter. It is true, as Miss Hopper has so delicately insinuated, that not knowing how to embroider, I *might* learn, but that is something I do not choose to do. I therefore prefer to hand in my resignation and let you find some one to fill my place who will be able to do everything you wish."

This was a very unexpected turn in affairs, and the managers, one and all, were deeply incensed at Miss Hopper because she had brought it about. Her obtuse conceit would not allow her to admit that any one was to blame except myself. She therefore began a recital of my shortcomings, which speedily became a series of abu-

sive invectives. In the midst of this the door into the hall was pushed further open, when I discovered that there was standing with Mr. Conrad no stranger, but my nephew! His face was a picture of distress and consternation. Almost at the same instant that my eyes fell on my nephew Miss Hopper astonished us all by exclaiming, while throwing up her arms as in a transport of joy:

“My dearest Harry! How unexpectedly delightful! But whether unexpected or not you are a thousand times welcome.”

All eyes were turned toward the two men. The young lady managers and myself had reasons for suspecting that the younger man was the one Miss Hopper had been corresponding with, and to whom she expected shortly to be married.

“Thanks for your welcome, Miss Hopper—Annie,” replied the young man, greatly embarrassed, “but I cannot tell you how I have been pained at being obliged to listen to your harsh words, for they have been directed against the dearest relative I have in the world,—my aunt.”

Here he came over to where I stood and stooped down and kissed me. I was so overcome that I fainted. It was just as well that I did, for I was spared the further witnessing of a trying scene. I afterward learned that Miss Hopper endeavored to atone for her unhandsome treatment of me by apology and regrets, which my nephew accepted, although he refused to renew the old relations between them. Exasperated at this attitude of her would-be lover Miss Hopper proceeded to give him a specimen copy of her list of adjectives and opprobrious epithets, which caused him to rejoice that he had found out, before it was forever too late, the character of the woman he was intending to marry.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LAWYER AND THE CLERGYMAN AT VARIANCE.

THERE was a peculiar sound heard on the gravel walk just outside the cloister. The hour was about eleven in the evening. It was the second day after the papers had reported the disappearance of the young and beautiful adventuress. A long and heavy box was lifted from an express wagon in a much more careful manner than that in which boxes are usually handled by men in that calling. Mr. Wormsley was on hand, and after ordering the box carried in at a lower back entrance, settled with the men and dismissed them. They had been told that the box contained a corpse, which was to have appropriate funeral services performed at the cloister and a burial from there on the following day. One of the men, being out of employment, asked if he might not come and assist at the burial, and could not understand why his offer was refused with such a tempest of oaths by Mr. Wormsley.

That gentleman proceeded to unscrew the box, after he had admonished the one-eyed woman remaining with him to see that the men were well out of the way. The screws came out hard and the sweat stood on the man's forehead as he worked over them.

"She's been d—— quiet ever since she was put in here, though she was wild enough before that!" he exclaimed.

"Maybe she's dead," said the woman.

"I wish she was!" ejaculated the man, with a terrible oath under his breath. Both man and woman were so

occupied that they did not hear the door swing noiselessly open and the form of Rector Dunraven glide in, holding a dark-lantern in his hand.

"Well, Wormsley, what does this mean?" asked the church dignitary.

Wormsley tried to replace the cover as he replied:

"Why, you gave me permission to bring this box here for storage. It's only for a week!" and the man continued his efforts at readjusting the cover. But before he could get the first screw in place there was a perceptible rising of the boards, accompanied by a groan.

"Open that cover this minute and let me see what you have in that box!" commanded the rector.

Wormsley felt in his hip pocket for his pistol as he stood undecided what to do, but he was not quick enough. The rector had out a bright silver weapon aimed right at his lawyer's heart.

"Hands up, you villain, or I'll shoot you like a dog."

The lawyer's reply was to throw up his arms and whine for mercy.

The woman now took hold and opened the box. Did ever chest contain more valuable treasure? Youth, beauty, the outward precious casket of a still more precious immortal soul.

The rector was speechless with amazement when he recognized the features of the girl and realized what a crime his lawyer had committed.

"It had to be done," replied the lawyer in answer to the expression; "and if it had not been for the cussed stupidity of Grout there might something decent come of it. But she's not dead. Didn't you hear her groan a minute ago?" continued the lawyer.

"So much the less easy to dispose of her," returned his companion grimly.

Wormsley's reply was to place his pistol's mouth over the region of the girl's heart and say:

"That is a defect that can be easily remedied. If you say so she can soon be." And sinking his voice to a whisper and throwing a black look at the one-eyed woman who stood with her back to them: "It would only take two to dispose of them both."

Unconsciously, as he had been speaking, his pistol had pressed on the half-conscious form and the pressure roused the girl. She started up suddenly, her beautiful hair falling in waves around her, the color coming to her cheeks and her large brown eyes opening in terror.

"Where am I?" she asked, as she glanced at the stone walls, the low ceiling, and then at the long, coffin-like box in which she was. "Were you going to kill me? Why hesitate a moment?" she continued passionately. "I am ready to go. Heaven contains nearly all my dear ones except my blessed father, and he would soon join us."

"Who said anything about killing you!" exclaimed Wormsley roughly. "You've been sick and we are kind enough to look after you and try to get you to a hospital, to be paid in suspicions that we are after your life."

"Oh, excuse me," cried the girl, the various sleeping draughts which had been given her making her ideas confused. "I don't mean to be ungrateful and I *do* feel ill." Then rousing herself, she asked, "Do they take all the people in coffins to the hospital to which you are carrying me?"

"Yes, mostly," returned Wormsley. "Now what you want to do is to remain quiet while me and my partner here go and make arrangements for moving on." Wormsley waved his hand to where the rector stood, but he had vanished.

"Are you not going to leave me a light?" asked the girl.

But Wormsley replied that he hadn't any to leave; that she must be satisfied with the company of the woman.

"Jane," cried Agnes in a whisper, as the dampness together with the dark seemed to make a thick pall around them, "are you there?"

"I be," replied the one-eyed woman, "what'll you have?"

"I thought that second man looked very much like some one I'd seen before. Do you know him, Jane?"

"I think I've hearn him spoke about," replied the woman.

"I think he's a minister and that I've seen him at the club," said Agnes; "perhaps he'll help us get rid of that other awful bad man."

"Don't you trust him, miss; to my way of thinking, one on 'em is just as bad as t'other. Have you that card writ on?"

"No, Jane, I haven't been able to get hold of a scrap of coal or a burnt match or anything to mark it with." Then, after a pause, "Were you able to drop pieces of my dress along the way, Jane?"

"Yes, quite a number."

All the conversation between these two had to be carried on in a whisper, else they feared separation; for Jane had been won over—by Agnes's pitiful gentleness in her forlorn condition—from a cruel, hard indifference to the misery she had helped to cause, to a state where it became her one absorbing desire to undo, if possible, some of the evils that she saw was the result of her bad ways. It was very ticklish business, for if Wormsley or any of the men he employed had suspected her of the change she would have been immediately discharged. Consequently

they maintained an unbroken silence if any one was near.

As soon as the rector and Mr. Wormsley had reached the upper part of the building, which was still unoccupied save by a deaf woman who acted as janitress until the finishing touches should be given and the place filled with cloisterettes, they engaged in an animated conversation, which we shall better understand after a few explanatory notes.

Mere chance had brought the rector to this building so late in the evening. "Chance" do we call it? It would be nearer the truth to call it Providence. But we are such short-sighted, shallow-pated creatures, we prefer to view events superficially and apply to them the term that such a glance suggests.

The rector had been experiencing the truth of the adage that it is more easy to get a favor from fortune than to keep it. He had often ruminated on what he should do if there should ever come a change, and the popular favor, which we have shown had set in such high tide toward him, should recede. He was a man who had too exalted an opinion of himself to really ever expect that such a change *could* come to *him*, but, alas, he had to admit that something bearing an exceedingly close resemblance to an ebb was even now upon him.

The day after the reception given to announce his engagement to Miss Mettle there were only three persons at his confessional. Two of these were his fiancée and her jubilant mother, who came there, if the truth must be known, more to talk over and hear what others had to say about the engagement than because their religious natures demanded absolution for sin. The third was an Irish woman, somewhat the worse for liquor, who grew abusive when he denied her request for "ten cints for car-

fare to get her to Brooklyn to see her sick mother." The dust began to collect in the chancel, on the altar railing, on the altar steps, on the communion table and the very altar itself. Silence reigned where formerly animated discussions had been carried on as to how far certain young ladies' boundaries extended, limiting their scrubbing operations. The rector heard the rustle of feminine drapery one morning in the corridor, and thinking one of the young ladies had come to resume her labors, stepped out to speak to her. She appeared very much embarrassed, and he soon found out she had simply come to remove the loose gown she had been in the habit of slipping over her street dress to protect it. He smiled grimly as he called to mind how interested that person had formerly shown herself in the doctrines.

She had been so excited over the fact that she had no settled theory of the inspiration of the Scriptures that she had felt it necessary to engage in long and tearful conversations with him at every possible opportunity, and when these opportunities did not occur often enough she supplemented them with numberless tear-stained epistles.

The rector wondered if Miss Nevins would be also changed. He was not long left in doubt, for she met him on the street and it seemed to have slipped her mind that she had ever known him, until the last minute, when a dim recollection appeared to visit her that he was some one she had seen before, and she gave him a correspondingly cordial nod. The prospect was not very encouraging. He yet owed Wormsley half of the amount he had promised him for his services. That very afternoon he had applied for the thirty per cent. interest on the sum the Working Girls' Club had borrowed from him. At the club rooms he had come across certain members of the executive committee, who promised him half of the proceeds of

the great bazaar. This was not altogether satisfactory, for there is something terribly uncertain about the proceeds of any affair of that kind. Finally he had gone to the home of his fiancée to see what advice or consolation he could receive there.

Miss Mettle was not in, but her mother was, and she was glad to see her prospective son-in-law alone a few minutes. She began in her effusive manner:

“My dear Augustus Mortimer, or Mortimer Augustus—I never can remember which it is, and I don’t suppose it really makes any difference; by the way, how would you like to be called Gussie or Gusty, or Morty? Oh, but of course we would not think of calling you that after you became bishop!—but, as I was saying, my dear Augustus Mortimer, I am very glad to see you and to see you alone. It seems to me, however, that you do not look very well.”

Her prospective son-in-law replied that he did not feel well, he was so over-burdened with care and anxiety.

“Ah, yes, poor man!” Mrs. Mettle resumed, “I can see you need some one to share your burdens with you. It is written somewhere, either in Homer or Virgil, I think, that ‘it is not good for man to live alone,’ and how true that is! Why, I shudder to think what Tuftus would have become without me,” and so on, until the rector did not know he should have a chance to say anything more that afternoon. But thanks to a fit of coughing he was enabled to revert to the interest the club owed him.

“Ah, it is a burning shame, poor man! Do they owe you that amount yet? Well, now, let me see; what can I advise you to do!” After a few minutes of thought, “What do you say to capturing their president? Then you’d be even with them. The club has your money; you return by taking their president. Then you would have the president’s bank account to depend on, her mother’s

bank account to expect a trifle from once in a while, to say nothing of her father's occasional blessing in the shape of bank checks."

That was all the remedy which the rector could get for his ills out of his doting mother-in-law. No matter in what shape he presented his troubles she met him at every turn with this one all-powerful panacea.

"When would you advise me to perpetrate this act of violence on the club?" the rector at length asked in sheer desperation.

"Two weeks from day after to-morrow," Mrs. Mettle replied promptly.

The rector thought a few minutes, then replied grimly:

"So be it; two weeks from day after to-morrow."

"Oh, *dearest* Augustus Mortimer, stoop down and let me imprint a mother's fond kiss on your forehead."

The rector stooped dutifully and had not only the kiss, but Mrs. Mettle's short, fat arms flew around his neck and nearly severed his jugular vein by their ardent embrace. After getting out to the sidewalk he could scarcely realize that he was the man whose wedding day was fixed for two weeks from day after to-morrow.

"It was not necessary," so he reflected as he pursued his homeward way, "for a man marrying into a family of the Mettles' wealth to have much money, but he *would* like to have enough to pay for engraving the wedding cards." After thinking over various schemes for raising this amount he decided to return one or two of the gifts made to the cloister. Several of them came from a firm who did engraving, and if he could get the articles down to his house in the evening it would be an easy matter to reach the store with them from there. That was the errand which brought the rector to the cloister

in time to hear the noise of the approach of the express wagon, and having his curiosity excited by the lateness of the hour and the evident attempt at secrecy, he appeared as has been shown. He was the first to break the silence.

“So you haven’t any more decency about you than to ask me, under the innocent request of storage-room for a week, to be the sharer of some of your infamous crimes!”

There was no more attempt at keeping up appearances between them.

“There is no infamous crime about it!” returned the lawyer. “That girl has committed an indiscretion, and I undertook at the request of her parents and friends——”

“Now there is no use of your finishing that tale. I know you are lying to me! I have seen the girl at the club rooms on Fifth Avenue, and I know she is the one the papers have been mentioning as having been forcibly abducted. What I am going to do is to ring up the police and claim the reward they have offered for your apprehension——”

“You can’t do that, by Jove! without implicating yourself!” exclaimed the lawyer stoutly. “You will have *your* story to tell and I’ll have *mine*. They both will be vastly entertaining matter.”

“But you forget that there will be this difference between them: *Mine* will be *believed*, because I am a clergyman; and the man has yet to be born who expects to hear truth from a lawyer.”

As the rector spoke he advanced slowly toward the telephone. When he had his hand on the knob the lawyer was a pitiful sight. He dropped on his knees and tears came from his eyes and marked their pathway down his grimy cheeks by lighter colored lines. He begged and

implored his companion to give him time, but not a muscle of the rector's face relaxed until he began to offer money. And even then his hand did not release its hold of the telephone until the lawyer produced some bank notes and gold coin. This caused the rector to pause and come to an agreement to allow the girl to be kept in the building until the following evening.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LOST ONE FOUND.

RECOVERING from my faint I insisted on transacting the business for which Mr. Conrad and my nephew had come. It seemed almost too good to be true that my dear nephew was the agent for the California firm who would have so much to do in the future with the making of the fortune of the girl who had grown so dear to me. Then the joy this thought afforded me would be suddenly dissipated by the uncertainty of that dear girl's whereabouts.

While we were in the midst of our consultations a telegram arrived from Mr. Grassey, asking me to meet him, as soon as it was dusk, at the corner of an uptown street. Mr. Conrad and my nephew decided it would be well for them to be of the party and also to take three strong men to be stationed within call.

I shall never forget that evening. The day had been an exceptionally fine one, and at the hour when we naturally expected dusk, the moon, being at the full, rose with such brightness that we could hardly realize that the day had closed and night had begun. Not wishing to excite suspicion we concluded to arrive singly at the place designated in the telegram. I went first and found Mr. Grassey pacing back and forth in a highly excited state.

"Have you had reason to believe she has been brought back to the city?" I asked, after our greetings.

"Yes, all there is left of her," he answered.

"What! You have not heard anything that made you think she was dead, have you?" I asked, stopping in our walk to support myself.

Mr. Grassey's answer was a melancholy shake of his head as he said:

"We traced the ambulance up to a distance of twenty miles above the place where you left us; then we discovered that after that point, though the ambulance was sent on and on, it was *empty*. Consequently we came back to where we could be sure that some one had seen an occupant in the ambulance, and by the merest chance we came across another person who had seen a box shaped like the rough outer receptacle to a coffin driven toward the city in an express wagon. We have traced that wagon by certain pieces of woolen cloth found along the roadside. Have you some of them, Bundy?" asked Mr. Grassey, as we overtook the detective in a carriage.

We stopped while the pieces were produced, and I could not have had more overpowering emotions if touched by a phantom hand from the spirit land as I beheld pieces of a dress which I had often seen Agnes wear.

"It's been some ways now since we've found a piece," said the detective.

But just at that moment my eyes, eagerly scanning the roadway, discovered something over on one side near the gutter. Picking it up I stood spellbound as I realized that I held in my hand another piece of my darling's dress. We were on the right track so far, but the avenue branched off in two directions just here and, waiting a moment to consider the question of dividing our forces so as to have both ways followed, we were joined by Mr. Conrad and my nephew. Mr. Grassey and Mr. Conrad had a whispered conversation, at the close of which I hear Mr. Grassey say:

"If I ever set eyes on Grout again I'll put a bullet through him as sure as my name's Grassey!"

We had separated and pursued our different paths but a short distance when there came the report of two pistol shots, which made the party at a distance seek an explanation by joining those whom they had left. We found that Mr. Grassey and the detective had been walking slowly and watchfully along until they came to the entrance of a peculiar building. A cab going at a furious rate was passing, when the gentleman within with an oath asked the driver why he was such a blockhead as not to know the right place when he got to it.

One glance was sufficient to reveal the evening dress, with the flashing diamond studs, of K. Roundout Grout. That gentleman recognized Grassey as soon as Grassey did him, and in vain tried to countermand his order to his cab driver to drive in at the entrance by urging him to continue.

Mr. Bundy said before he knew what was being done Mr. Grassey was at the cab window and the two men were firing point-blank at each other. When we arrived on the scene they were being borne up the steps of the peculiar building, Mr. Grassey shot through the left shoulder and Mr. Grout in the right groin.

Mr. Grassey was very weak from loss of blood when I bent over him, but he whispered eagerly:

"*She* is in this house, I know. Don't let anything be taken out without searching."

Bundy was dispatched to keep a watch on the outside of the building and we soon heard his warning whistle calling for aid. He had discovered an apparently innocent load of wood about to be driven out of the grounds.

He said afterward he came very near letting the team pass, and perhaps he would have done so, if several

of the sticks of wood had not tumbled off, when near him, revealing the presence of a box beneath, which he thought had better be examined.

The driver paid no attention to the detective's command to halt, except to give his horses a sharp touch with his whip. My nephew, however, was brought on the scene by the warning whistle and, taking in the situation at a glance, made a dash for the horses' heads. The horses reared and plunged as their driver rained down blows upon them, and upon the one who interfered with their onward progress. But horses and driver found they had to deal with no puny force in the arm raised against them.

"Young man, gentlemen," exclaimed a voice, as the detective, my nephew and their sympathizers were gathered around the team and its bound driver, who lay cursing and swearing by the roadside and who was none other than the lawyer, Wormsley, "I do not understand why you detain this load of merchandise and fuel which this poor man, unable to move in the day time on account of his necessary toil, is conveying to his new quarters. This person you have so cruelly bound was for a time janitor of this building; but he has found other employment where his remuneration is to be greater, and hence his taking his effects as you see." It was the rector who spoke.

A wave of shame swept over the group and they said they felt as though they had been caught in an act of theft. Some one unbound the man and he was in the act of leaping on the wagon when my nephew put his hand upon him and said:

"Not so fast, my man. We must first see what is in that box underneath the wood there."

"Can't you take my word as a clergyman that it contains household goods and what not, that it would be

perfectly right for you to see, but which, if you consume the time to unpack, this poor man will be unable to convey to his destination in time to resume work on the morrow," answered Rector Mortimer Augustus Dunraven, his thin ungainly figure stretching up to such a height in the moonlight as to give him the air of a priest of the black art.

"For God's sake, search that box!" came in an agonized groan from the porch where Mr. Grassey was lying, being attended by only myself in the intense excitement over the stopping of the team.

All hesitation vanished. One of the men we had brought stepped to the horses' heads. Mr. Bundy and my nephew lifted the box upon the ground while Mr. Conrad proceeded to rebind Mr. Wormsley. Who would attempt to describe our sensations as, the cover being removed, we beheld the beautiful form of Agnes Dearborn!

"Mrs. Winn, support me," cried Kipp Grassey piteously; "I must go down there and see if she lives."

"Dear fellow," I said, as he leaned heavily and yet could scarcely totter over the ground, "I fear you will make your wound bleed afresh."

"Don't talk of such trifles as wounds when *she* is to be served, Mrs. Winn," panted the sufferer. "Oh, merciful Father in Heaven! It looks as though we had come too late!"

The moonlight fell on Agnes's lovely features and gave them a cold, deathlike hue.

"Don't let go of me, Mrs. Winn; I feel such a blackness coming over me."

"No, no, dear boy, I am holding you," I cried, while the tears flowed down my cheeks in spite of my effort to

control them. My nephew came to my assistance and Mr. Grassey said, when he felt his strong arm:

"That's right, Mrs. Winn; hold me fast. You have been a comfort to me. You have been the only one to whom I could talk of her. And, oh, Mrs. Winn, you know without my telling you that the only part of my life when I can say I truly lived was after—was after—oh, you know when——"

"There, there," I murmured as I would to a baby, "don't talk any more."

"But I must talk, Mrs. Winn. I must tell you that I went down the next day after she accused me of being so cruel, and made my will. You know I have no family except James. I made a will and left everything, except an annuity to James, to her, to try and prove to her that I was not as bad as she thought me. And now, Mrs. Winn, she will not know the truth until we meet in heaven. But a few words will make it all right there, Mrs. Winn!"

"Yes, my dear boy, there will be no misunderstandings for us to shed tears over in heaven, blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"And, Mrs. Winn, I should never have gone there if the wonderful love which was sent into my heart for her had not reminded me of God and what I owed Him for the love He had shown me in the gift of His Son to die for my sins. So I am at peace—at peace."

"We must lay him on the ground and do something to stop his wound from bleeding," I whispered to my nephew, as I looked at the shoulder he was leaning upon and saw the fresh blood.

We were roused from our efforts in Mr. Grassey's behalf by smothered exclamations of delight, and looking around we saw Agnes sitting up.

"Mr. Grassey, dear boy, you have saved her!" I cried.

His eyes opened and rested upon me a moment with a far-away expression, and then he shook his head sadly:

"No, no, I have not saved her," he said, "but she and the grace of God have saved me," and he was dead.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FAREWELL TO ALL.

HIS holiness the rector of the chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven had no words of consolation to offer to Kipp Grassey, dying; he did not even consider it necessary to suggest patience to the "former janitor," in whose welfare he previously expressed such deep interest and who lay cursing and swearing in his bonds in the porch of the building devoted to the highly philanthropic purpose of turning out cloisterettes.

The deep-voiced ex-congressman, the Honorable K. Roundout Grout, made the night air hideous with his groans and lamentations; and although the ecclesiastic could not be expected to sympathize with the fate of a man whose stupidity, added to his baseness, had brought such trouble, yet there were a good many remarks that might have been made relative to the ex-congressman's reaping the just reward of his evil deeds.

But the rector said and did none of these things. He simply vanished, and that, too, with such expedition that, if the events occurring at the same time had not served to absorb the interest of his companions, they would have been reminded of a dissolving view. The investigation which he felt sure would follow that evening's proceedings was something he dreaded. He therefore bethought him of a midnight express which he determined to take. But first he wished to go to his home and destroy some papers in his desk, in order not to leave behind him a record of

crooked dealings that might make persons prejudiced against him feel like searching the round globe over to bring him to justice, or bring justice to him.

When he reached his grey stone manse, the time was limited before the leaving of his train. The lights, shining brightly, assured him that Johannah was faithfully at her post. He wished that it might have been her evening off duty. He hesitated as to what explanation he should make to her of his contemplated actions, and peering in the windows he saw she was fast asleep. He cautiously opened the front door, and sounds showing that Johannah's slumber had converted her nose into a temporary wind instrument emitting an unusual volume of sound, made her master conclude not to rouse the sleeper, but go to his room and pack his valise with as great caution and speed as possible.

He had torn up and burned several papers, and placed others, together with what clothing he felt necessary, in his bag, when he happened to think of still other documents which were hidden in the altar (or folding bed). It was the work of a moment to pull this open and secure the papers, but before he had time to replace it he heard Johannah's footstep on the stair. It seemed that other things might be moved without arousing her, but when this object of veneration, over which she kept such a jealous and almost fierce watch, was stirred, although it was done ever so carefully, the mysterious power of mind over matter caused her to awaken with a start.

Ever since her experience with the lawyer, Wormsley, when she had caught him laying sacrilegious hands on the altar and had walked him off so promptly, she had been haunted by the idea that he would return to do it damage some day if she did not exercise great vigilance. Consequently this evening, as soon as her consciousness

was fully restored, she felt impelled to go first of all to the shrine before which she had poured so many tears and prayers. There was no light in the room, as the rector had turned off the one he had been using, and his valise lay behind a big armchair; hence Johannah breathed a deep sigh of relief to find the lofty outline of the altar unbroken and, in the dim light which came from the hall, everything seemed untouched. The contrast was so great from the picture her imaginations had many times brought up before her of the black-eyed, greasy-haired man flourishing an ax, by the means of which he was destroying not only the altar but everything around it, that she advanced to her accustomed place and fell on her knees.

As she did so she was impressed with a feeling that the altar was not as upright as usual, and this impression was strengthened when she received a bump on arising from her prostration. Both for this reason and because her eyes had become more accustomed to the dimness of the light she looked sharply about her and, lo and behold, at one side of the venerated structure there was a man's leg sticking out.

The reader must be told that the rector thinking it the easiest way out of his difficulty, when he heard his serving-woman coming, endeavored to hide himself by drawing his folding-bed up into the form of an altar with himself inside. The perfect success of this undertaking was interfered with by his *not* being quick enough to draw in one leg and its being caught in a most uncomfortable, not to say painful, position. The only one who could own such a dastardly limb, according to Johannah's belief, was the evil looking lawyer. She had probably interrupted him in his work of destruction. What good angel had led her to the spot so opportunely!

"You monster of uncleanness and all iniquity!" she said, as she pinched the leg and stuck pins in it, "you dragon! this is what you get for trying to violate the sacred place of my saintly master, his holiness the rector of the Chapel of the Holy Madonna in Heaven."

As groans came from within Johannah's fury seemed to be increased.

"Base reptile!" she cried, snatching the shoe from the foot at the end of the now limp leg, "I am of a mind to break each toe——"

"Johannah, Johannah!" The rector spoke in his most authoritative tones, his fear lest the threat just uttered be carried out lending strength to his voice.

The woman sank down on her knees in her distress and agitation.

"That sounds like the tones of my saintly master's voice; but it must be a case of the devil assuming the garb of an angel of light."

Johannah was prevented from returning to her former persecutions by commands from within to take hold of the altar at a certain place and bear down with all her might. Against her will, but because she had always obeyed that voice, the woman complied. The revelations which followed were of such a startling and overpowering nature that she dropped senseless to the floor.

"I forgive the woman the ill she did me," exclaimed his holiness, limping around to complete his preparations for departure, "though I believe she stuck those pins in clear to the bone. I wonder who she thought I was? She talked as though I was some one she had been expecting. As I go out I will ring the bell for the other servant to come down and minister to her necessities. It would doubtless be undesirable for her to see me on her first return to consciousness."

The rector did as he suggested and reached his train in time to jump on the last car as it was slowly moving out of the station. He disappears from our story at the same time that he disappears from the scenes herein described, though there may be some who will be interested to know that he has attained great celebrity at the head of an austere and holy brotherhood in an adjacent country.

As for Johannah the events of that evening made a profound impression upon her mind. She entered the service of a Quaker lady and embraced the views of her mistress with as much ardor as she previously did those of her saintly master the rector, etc., etc. The mere sight of a cross produces a nervous shock, so great is her aversion to those signs and symbols of which she formerly made use so freely. Every once in a while she has long talks with her mistress about the desirability of starting a mission for the deluded, erring members of society who believe in making the sign of the cross, who go to confessional and keep fast and saint's days, who pray to the Virgin and believe in the elevation of the Host and who yet are not Roman Catholics.

"Ma'am," she earnestly asked one day, "don't you think it 'ud be possible, if a person worked hard night and day, to place the matter in such a light that they'd either be willin' to go to the Roman Catholic church, where they belong, or else become good Protestants? They're absolutely *no good* as they be!"

The news of the rector's midnight departure affected Mrs. Mettle very disastrously. She actually took to her bed. But her family was not as alarmed by that symptom as they were by the fact that she asked to have the Bible read to her. This was a volume, as our friends have seen, with which she was but little acquainted.

When, therefore, her husband, sitting by her bedside, asked her what chapter she wanted read, she could name none. He took a Bible, however, and turned the leaves over listlessly, reading a verse here and there; finally he came across and read aloud this passage:

“‘For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage——’”

“Oh, Tuftus!” exclaimed Mrs. Mettle, catching hold of her husband’s arm with a fervid grasp, “read that again!”

Her husband did so and she repeated after him:

“‘Neither marry nor are given in marriage.’ That’s the most blessed description of heaven that could possibly be written. There could not be a more convincing proof, to my mind, of the authenticity of the Scriptures. ‘Neither marry, nor are given in marriage.’ Oh, Tuftus, I am ready for such a place, I am sure I am. Where is Ray? Call her to receive her mother’s parting blessing.”

“Why, my dear wife, the doctors never thought you were so ill as that,” returned her husband, burying his face in his hands and sobbing aloud.

“And has she gone out?” asked Mrs. Mettle.

“Yes, my dear, she has gone to an oratorio with Mr. Peck.”

“But, Tuftus,” Mrs. Mettle continued, in a tone of voice quite different from that to be expected from a person near her end, “Mr. Peck is a widower with four children!”

“I know it, my dear; but I have been so anxious about you that if he had had fourteen it would have been all the same.”

A physician who could prescribe a tonic which would act with the efficiency and promptitude that that simple announcement did on Mrs. Mettle would find himself re-

ferred to as a leader in his profession, besides having his doors besieged by those needing to be "toned up."

"A widower with four children, and Tuftus no more care than to allow it!" Mrs. Mettle kept saying to herself.

She felt it was a matter for which everything must be set aside, even going to that blessed place where there was "no marrying or giving in marriage." For though she sighed for rest from the struggle she did not want to secure it by such ignominious terms as a widower and four children!

The story of her valiant exertions to prevent the actual occurrence of this untoward event is too long to give here. The result of those exertions, alas, was failure—failure as complete and signal as had attended all her previous efforts in regard to her daughter from her fifteenth year up.

In spite of pleadings and importunities her daughter married the widower with the four children and is now Mrs. Peck. But the author is glad to be able to add that after her daughter's marriage Mrs. Mettle became so fond of the formerly despised four children that, although she does not actually attempt to palm them off as her daughter's progeny, she never refers to their being "step-children," nor cautions them against hurting their little "half brother," a baby boy for whose existence her daughter is more nearly responsible.

Now it remains for us to hear a few parting words from Mrs. Winn, and she says:

"Kind readers, in closing I wish to thank you for your considerate attention to my part of this humble tale. I feel that I have taxed your powers of sympathy and condolence to the utmost in relating the many unhappy experiences through which I was called to pass.

I am glad that what remains to be told will only call forth expressions of congratulation.

“Kipp Grassey was laid to rest beside his father and mother in Greenwood. His man, James, constituted himself nurse and attendant upon Mr. Dearborn. The wish of my heart—to see my nephew happily married—has been fulfilled in the way above all others most pleasing to me, by his marrying Agnes. We make a happy household on the Pacific coast—Agnes, her father, his attendant, my nephew and myself.

“Among my most valued correspondents is Mrs. Elijah Bowman (formerly Mrs. Thatcher). She attended the bazaar the young lady managers hoped to reap so much benefit from, in aid of their Working Girls’ Club—hopes, alas, doomed to utter destruction. All of those articles which had been brought to me to embroider had been taken elsewhere; but the time allowed for the execution had been so limited and the work so ill done, that the managers were obliged to buy the articles themselves and pay the extortionate prices they had affixed to them. The only alternative was to borrow money to pay the expenses of the bazaar. Their credit was an insurmountable barrier to that course of procedure.

“Mrs. Bowman always has a great deal to tell me of the prosperity of that object dear to her own and her husband’s heart—the Mission. Its pathway is not one of uncheckered sunshine, by any means, but through all kinds of vicissitudes, by the unostentatious character of its benefactor it proves to the world:

“*‘None shall rule but the humble,
And none but Toil shall have.’*”

THE END.

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